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CHARACTERISTICS, TRAINING, AND PERFORMANCE OF HOUSEPARENTS

IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The majority of all blind children in the United States continue to be educated in residential schools for the blind despite the growth of a movement to educate these children in the public school classes nearest their homes. At the residential schools, attention is now focused on the supervision of the blind child and his activities away from the classroom where he is under the supervision and subsequently the influence of the houseparent more than any other staff member during his residential school career. The attitude and competency of the houseparent may determine the extent of the child's acceptance of institutional routine and his later adjustment to school and society.

Although the qualifications and competencies of teachers of blind children are periodically examined, there has been no comprehensive analysis of the performance and training of other residential school employees. Because administrators have neither specified the qualifications for the houseparent position nor identified the particular skills required to discharge the duties competently, there is a growing demand that the factors affecting houseparent performance be examined. In view of the dearth of qualified houseparent applicants, the training of those caring for visually handicapped children should also be freshly evaluated.

Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify houseparent characteristics, the types of training available, and the factors that contribute to houseparent competency in residential schools for the blind.

The following questions encompass the areas of the study:

1. What is the nature of the houseparent's position in the institutional staff pattern?
2. What administrative policies govern the selection and performance of houseparents?
3. What training is available to houseparents?
4. What characteristics are common to successful houseparents?

When administrators recognize the houseparent influence upon the adjustment of blind children and appreciate the contribution of the out-of-school activities to child development, more intelligent planning can be instituted to improve the environment of children in residential schools for the blind by utilizing the data reported in this study.

Method

Because of the complexity of the relationships between the children, their parents, the staff, and houseparents, a study of the houseparent function in a residential school for the blind requires a variety of techniques. To initiate this investigation, 3 questionnaires were developed which requested census-type information regarding the houseparent; i. e., her age, marital status, years of work experience, education, salary, months of employment, duty hours, and previous experience as a houseparent. (See Appendix.) In addition, specific

aspects of the houseparent relationship with the staff and the parents of the children were explored.

The preliminary drafts of these questionnaires were used for interviews with superintendents at 3 residential schools (Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee) and 4 consultants attending the Tennessee Houseparent Conference before the questionnaires were modified and the final forms printed.

All 48 administrators of residential schools for the blind in the United States who employ houseparents were requested to cooperate with this study.¹ Data were supplied by 36 administrators (75 per cent) representing institutions in 33 states who responded to the first questionnaire, "A Survey of the Status of Houseparents" (Appendix A). See Table 1.

Upon request, 30 of the 36 administrators forwarded the names of the 269 houseparents that were sent the second questionnaire, "Status of House Parents", (Appendix B) of whom 117 (43 per cent) contributed personal data and opinions regarding their conditions of work.

The third questionnaire, "What Should Be the Status of Houseparents", (Appendix C) was also sent to the administrators of whom 34 (71 per cent) registered their opinions regarding desirable requirements and working conditions for the houseparent position.

A fourth questionnaire "Characteristics and Performance of

¹One parochial residential school did not participate because houseparent positions were filled by Sisters. The address list of participating residential schools may be found in: Frampton, M. E. and Gall, E. D. (ed.), Special Education for the Exception, Vol. II: The Physically Handicapped and Special Health Problems, (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1955), p. 95. Residential Schools for the Blind are not located in 8 states.

Table 1

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF RESPONDENTS SENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaire	Type of Participants	Number sent Questionnaires	Useable Data Reported by:	
			Number	Per cent
"A Survey of the Status of House Parents" (Appendix A)	Administrators, Residential Schools for the Blind	48	36	75.0
"Status of House Parents" (Appendix B)	Houseparents, Residential Schools for the Blind	269	117	43.1
"What Should Be the Status of Houseparents" (Appendix C)	Administrators, Residential Schools for the Blind	48	^a 34	70.9
"Characteristics and Performance of House Parents" (Appendix D)	Child-care authorities	(72) 102	(23) 45	(33.7) 44.1
	Co-workers of houseparents	(30)	(22)	(73.3)

^a Over 62 per cent of the administrators had completed the first questionnaire also.

of Houseparents", (Appendix D) was constructed to determine the preferred qualities in houseparent performance by utilizing over 200 items which were selected, not only for the prominence given the related topics in the literature on child care and group living, but because they appeared to have merit for investigative purposes. The questionnaire was sent to 30 co-workers¹ of houseparents and 72 child care authorities² from whom there were 45 applicable replies (44 per cent).³ See Table 1.

The data collected through the use of the questionnaires were analyzed, and where possible, tabulated and interpreted.

¹Co-workers were: All nurses supervising houseparents of blind children, all education consultants of national agencies serving the blind, all pre-school workers assigned to the same type of program, all directors of educational research with printing houses serving the blind, all university social work supervisors assigned to residential schools for the blind, and all principals of state schools for the blind listed in the principals' division of the American Association of Instructors for the Blind (1954-1955) who were staff members of schools serving only visually handicapped children. If two principals were listed for the same school, the female received the questionnaire because male principals predominated. Principals were not included who were also serving in the capacity of superintendent.

²Child care authorities were consultants on foster child care with the United States Childrens Bureau, 31 authors who have contributed to the literature concerning houseparents, and administrators of private residential schools for the deaf and physically handicapped listed in the Handbook of Private Schools, (Porter-Sargent, 1953) pp. 573-574.

³Over 73 per cent of those working with blind children returned usable data with 16 schools for the blind represented.

CHAPTER II

CHARACTERISTICS, VOCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS, AND OPINIONS RELATIVE TO HOUSEPARENTS

With the growth of the movement to educate as many blind children in their home communities as feasible, the purposes and services of the residential schools for the blind are being subjected to close scrutiny. Among these services, care of the children elicits immediate attention because of the time spent by the blind child away from his family during the formative years. Well defined descriptions of houseparent characteristics and duties do not exist although the houseparent holds an integral position on the residential school staff. Recommendations can be proposed regarding houseparent duties and child care services only when position descriptions and requirements are available for reference.

Characteristics of Houseparents

Specifically, what typifies the houseparent as to age, sex, marital status, education, and experience? What are the requirements and conditions of employment? What are the houseparent opinions regarding their staff positions, work conditions, supervisors, and professional training? To determine the characteristics of houseparents and to explore the institution setting within which they perform their duties, 48 administrators were requested to report census-like information regarding their houseparents. From these reports, data were compiled concerning 325 houseparents in 36 residential schools. See Table 2 for a compilation of the staff pattern of each institution reported by the administrators.

Table 2

7

NUMBER, SEX, AND MARITAL STATUS OF HOUSEPARENTS IN THIRTY-SIX RESIDENTIAL
SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND--REPORTED BY ADMINISTRATORS

Institution	Total House- parents	Female House- parents	Male House- parents	Married Couples	Houseparents married to other staff members
A	15	13	2		1
B	8	7	1	1	2
C	2	2			
D	12	10	2		
E	5	3	2	3	2
F	13	8	5		
G	2	2			
H	7	6	1		
I	4	4 ^a			
J	16	15	1		
K ^b	27	22	5		2
L	13	13			1
M	13	11	2		1
N	7	6	1		
O	15	13	2	1	
P	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	4	$\frac{1}{2}$ ^c	1	1
Q	6	3	3		
R	7	6	1		
S	15	14	1		1

Table 2 (continued)

Institution	Total House-parents	Female House-parents	Male House-parents	Married Couples	Houseparents married to other staff members
T	8	7	1		
U	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	5	$\frac{1}{2}$ ^c		
V	14	8	6 ^d		3
W	15	15			
X	6	5	1		
Y	20	20			
Z	10	9	1		2
AA	6	6			
BB	6	5	1		
CC	3	2	1	1	1
DD	2	2			
EE	5	4	1		
FF	3	3			
GG	8	8			
HH	6	6			1
II	6	5	1		
JJ	10	7	3	1	
Totals	325	279	46	8	18

^aAll widows.

^bTen staff members act in the capacity of houseparents part time.

Of the 36 institutions, 11 have only women on the houseparent staff; in 19 others, 80 to 100 per cent were women, yet in contrast, one-half of the houseparents at one institution were men. If the faculties of the residential schools for the blind have approximately the same sex composition as those in public school, there is a limited masculine influence on the pupils.

Eight married couples served as houseparents (3 from one institution) and 16 houseparents were married to other staff members. Of the 117 houseparents who completed Questionnaire II, over 44 per cent reported that they were married (6 to other staff members), and, although not requested, one-third also noted that they were widows. (See Table 3)

Inasmuch as institutional attitudes may be dependent upon the age of the staff members, participants in the study were requested to report the ages of houseparents. Administrator reports indicate that 70 per cent of their houseparents were over 50 years of age; 45 per cent were from 51 to 61 years of age; and 25 per cent of the houseparents were above 61.

Of the 117 houseparents participating in this survey over 65 per cent were 50 years or older with 30 per cent above 60 years of age. Of the institutions surveyed in 1940-41, Hopkirk found 36 per cent of houseparents were over 50 years of age; and, of these, 26 per cent were reported to be within the age range of 50 to 59 years of age. The data

¹W. Hopkirk, Institutions Serving Children. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1944), p. 72.

Table 3

NUMBER, SEX, AND MARITAL STATUS OF REPORTING HOUSEPARENTS IN
THIRTY-TWO RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND

School	Total House- parents	Female House- parents	Male House- parents	Widows	Married	
					Yes	No
A	4	4	0	1	2	1
D	3	2	1	2	1	
E	1	1	0	0	1	
F	3	3	0	0	2	1
H	7	7	0	7		
J	9	9	0	3	6	
K	8	6	2	2	1	5
L	3	3	0	0	3	
M	1	0	1	0	1	
N	3	3	0	1	2	
O	8	7	1	2	6	
Q	2	0	2	0	1	1
R	4	4	0	3		1
S	2	2	0	0	1	1
T	4	3	1	1	3	
U	5	5	0	1	2	2
V	4	4	0	3	1	
W	8	8	0	2		6
X	2	1	1	1	1	

Table 3 (continued)

School	Total House- parents	Female House- parents	Male House- parents	Widows	Married	
					Yes	No
Y	1	1	0	1		
Z	2	2	0	0		2
AA	5	5	0	2	1	2
BB	4	3	1	2	1	1
CC	2	2	0	2		
EE	1	1	0	0	1	
FF	1	1	0	1		
GG	5	5	0	3	2	
HH	1	1	0	1		
II	5	5	0	5		
JJ	5	5	0	1	3	1
KK	2	1	1	0	2	1
LL	2	2	0	1	1	0
Totals	117	106	11	41	52	24

suggests that persons now employed as houseparents at residential schools for the blind are older than the houseparents employed in 1940-41. See Table 4.

Table 4
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEPARENTS

Age Distribution	Reported by Administrators		Reported by Houseparents	
	Number of houseparents	Per cent	Number of houseparents	Per cent
Under 21	^a 1	.4		
21 - 30	8	3.1	13	11.1
31 - 40	29	11.1	10	8.5
41 - 50	40	15.4	12	10.2
51 - 60	^b 117	45.0	41	34.9
61 - 70	62	23.9	31	26.5
Above 70	3	1.2	5	4.3
No age report	^c		5	4.3
Totals	260	100.1	117	99.8

^aEmployed as houseparent part of day.

^bOne person employed as houseparent part of day.

^cFive administrators did not report houseparent ages.

Beside age range, the extent of each houseparent's education was also explored during this study since there is no professional training in this country for houseparents, thus limiting the educational criteria

that might be applied to applicants. Admittedly, the possession of a high school graduation certificate does not insure the competency of a houseparent, but the applicant with only elementary school education may face particular problems of communication in her work with secondary school students.

Table 5

NUMBER OF YEARS OF EDUCATION REQUIRED OF APPLICANTS FOR THE
HOUSEPARENT POSITION

Number of years of education	Administrators reporting	Per cent
None	6	16.7
Eight	3	8.3
Nine	1	2.8
Ten	2	5.6
Eleven	0	
Twelve	19	52.8
Sixteen	1	2.8
No answer	4	11.1
Totals	36	100.1

According to the administrator replies summarized on Table 5, over 16 per cent of the institutions have no educational requirements for applicants to the houseparent position, and 8 per cent require only an elementary education. Over 50 per cent of the administrators reported that high school graduation is required of applicants, and in addition,

one superintendent preferred a college degree with 18 hours credit in special education. One superintendent observed that 4 of his 7 houseparents are teachers of whom 3 had the BA Degree. One administrator cited the importance of courses in child guidance, growth and development, and child psychology to the houseparent preparation while another urged child care and psychology courses as in-service training. Of the houseparents participating in the survey, one reported 5 years of education in contrast to three with 17 years. See Table 6. Seventy per cent of the houseparents had completed high school, of whom 54 per cent had continued their education

Aside from their education, the attitude of houseparents toward children may be influenced by their experience with children outside of the family unit. All but a small percentage of the houseparents have cared for children other than their own; the highest percentage of houseparents specifying 10 years of experience. (See Table 7). Over 37 per cent took the position without having cared for other children previously.

To examine the other types of experience that might influence houseparents, administrators were requested to list the experience requirements of applicants. Although no specific types of experiences were required by 17 superintendents, 8 desired experience with children and 2 expected applicants to be a mother or to have had experience in orphanages or in similar institutions. One administrator required experience as houseparent, youth worker, camp counselor or nurse; another, personnel; another, successful employment in working with people; another, experience in teaching, guidance, or parentage. One superintendent

Table 6

YEARS OF EDUCATION COMPLETED BY HOUSEPARENTS

School Years Completed	Number of Houseparents	Per cent
5	1	.9
6	1	.9
8	9	7.7
9	7	5.9
10	7	5.9
11	6	5.1
12	38	32.5
13	7	5.1
14	21	17.9
15	4	3.4
16	8	6.8
17	3	2.6
Education not reported	5	4.3
Totals	117	99.0

Table 7

YEARS OF CHILD-CARE EXPERIENCE REPORTED BY HOUSEPARENTS

^a Years	Number of houseparents	Per cent	^a Years	Number of houseparents	Per cent
None	7	5.9	15	3	2.6
1	2	1.7	16	1	.8
2	3	2.6	17	1	.8
3	8	6.8	20	9	7.7
4	5	4.3	22	2	1.7
5	4	3.4	23	1	.8
6	8	6.8	25	4	3.4
7	6	5.1	29	1	.8
8	5	4.3	30	1	.8
9	3	2.6	35	2	1.7
10	5	4.3	40	3	2.6
11	11	9.4	42	1	.8
12	3	2.6	50	1	.8
14	1	.8	Years not reported	15	12.8
			Totals	117	99.5

^a Years of experience with other than houseparent's own children.

proposed that a year of experience with children was desirable but not required of his applicants.

In an effort to establish the experience criteria for applicants, the houseparents were asked to list any previous experience or employment that had been useful to them as houseparents. Teaching had assisted 39 of the houseparents; Sunday school activities served 28, and rearing their own children prepared 24 houseparents for their work.

(See Table 8.)

To determine other types of experience that assist houseparents, they were asked to list hobbies, interests, skills or abilities that have helped. In reply, hobbies were useful to more than the 13 who responded to the previous request; in that 26 indicated sewing assisted, music aided 23, and 10 replied that their interest in games had been a support. Sixteen of the houseparents proposed that their pleasure from reading aloud had been of assistance to them, while 5 reported story telling is a helpful hobby. Seven observed that cooking was serviceable, 7 noted knitting, others reported crocheting. Six reported that painting had been useful with the partially sighted children and 2 responded that dancing had helped. For 3, scouting had been of assistance.

Conditions of Employment

Skills, abilities and characteristics tabulated so far in this study help describe the type of person employed as a houseparent and subject to the conditions of employment found in the residential schools for the blind.

The principal media by which nearly one-fourth of the houseparents

Table 8
TYPES OF EXPERIENCE HELPFUL TO HOUSEPARENTS

Experience area	Number of houseparents
Teaching	39
Church and Sunday school activities.	28
Rearing own children	24
Hobbies	13
Nursing and hospital work.	15
Sports	17
Youth club activities.	11
Houseparent at another institution	9
Other institutional positions.	10
Handcraft activities	9
Youth counseling	8
Foster home child care	7
Nursery school activities.	5
Beauty culture.	3
Civic club activities	2
College activities	2
Activity as playground supervisor.	4
None.	4
Total responses	210
No responses	16

located their positions was through referrals made by friends of the institution. Over 14 per cent made application when the opportunity for employment was advertised and openings for almost as many were found through staff contacts. (See Table 9.)

Table 9

SOURCE OF INFORMATION REGARDING HOUSEPARENT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
REPORTED BY HOUSEPARENTS

	Houseparents	
	Number	Per cent
Government employment service	12	10.2
Employment or teacher agencies	2	1.7
Administrators	11	9.4
Friends	29	24.8
Staff members	16	13.7
Advertisements	17	14.5
Voluntary application	12	10.2
Church	1	.9
Staff reassignment	12	10.2
No response	5	4.3
Totals	117	99.9

Although administrators depend upon a variety of media in the search for houseparent applicants, 5 depend upon personal recruitment. (See Table 10.) In only 8 states does the civil service screen applicants for the houseparent position.

Table 10

AGENCY REFERRAL OF HOUSEPARENT APPLICANTS
REPORTED BY ADMINISTRATORS

	Number of replies
No agency	9
No specific agency.	3
Administrator recruitment	5
State civil service	4
State employment agency	4
Private employment agency	4
U. S. employment agency	2
All agency employment groups.	1
State department of public welfare.	1
Newspaper advertisements.	2
Staff members	2
Total responses.	37
No response.	8

An important factor in recruitment is the range of houseparent salaries that varied in 1954 - 1955 from the highest minimum of \$3,245 to the lowest of \$1,315 with the highest maximum salary reported as \$4,246 and the lowest maximum \$1,435. (See Table 11.) Another study of salaries paid institutional personnel during 1953-1954 indicated the same salary ranges for houseparents.¹

There is a wide variation between sections of the country and the various institutions within each section as to the amount of value placed upon the board, room, and other services provided for a houseparent. Since the tabulation on Table 11 shows this valuation to vary from \$300 to \$1,000 for ten months, salary comparisons can only be estimates. A low salary plus a very high valuation for board, room, and services may equal a high salary that carries an allowance of only \$300 for the same services.

To compare with other members of the staff, who are employed for approximately the same number of months, teachers' salaries were used as a base. In one report the minimum houseparent salary equaled the teachers' but in 13 other institutions the maximum houseparent salary was equivalent to or was above the teachers' minimum.

Inasmuch as difficulties arise when comparing salaries from different sections of the country, administrators were requested to compare faculty salaries with those of other teachers in each state. Over

¹M. E. Frampton, "Study of Salaries and Wages Paid Personnel in Thirty Four Residential Schools in the U. S.," (New York: New York Institute for Blind, 1954). Pp. 4,5. (Micrographed.).

Table 11

HOUSEPARENT ANNUAL SALARIES AND MONTHS OF EMPLOYMENT REPORTED BY ADMINISTRATORS
FACULTY SALARIES LISTED FOR COMPARISON WITH LOCAL AND STATE-WIDE SALARIES
1954-1955

School (1)	Months employed (2)	Houseparent Salaries		Faculty Salaries			
		Minimum (3)	Maximum (4)	Minimum (5)	Maximum (6)	Local Salaries (7)	State-wide Salaries (8)
A	9	\$3245	\$3733	\$3900	\$6360	A	A
B	9	2200 + \$800 ^b	2900	3200 + \$800	5500	A	A
C	10	1950 + 900	1950	3500 + 900	3500		
D	12	3264	4276	3374	5340	B	B
E	10	2400	3300	2400	4200	S	
F	9	1550 + 850	1700	2400	4800	B	S
G	9	1350 + 1000	1350	2000 + 1000	2000	S	B

^a"A" in column 7 indicates that faculty salaries in the residential school for the blind are above those in neighboring local schools. "B" indicates salaries are below the local schools and "S" represents the same. In column 8 the comparison with state-wide salaries is noted using the same code.

^bThe sign "+" preceding the entry indicates the estimated value of services, board, and room offered in addition to the above salary.

Table 11 (continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
H	10	\$2390 + c \$2960		\$3600	\$5618	S	A
I	10	2340	2952	2628	3300	S	A
J	9½	2290	2709	3450	5630	A	A
K	9	1250 + \$1000	2400	2400 + \$1000	3600	S	S
L	12	2112	2880	2880	4600		
M	9	1650 + 450	2500	3250	4600	B	A
N	11	2090	2695	2640	3360	B	B
O	9	2050	3240	3600	5640	S	B
P	9	2061	2618	2205	3690	B	B
Q	9 ^d	1575 + 450	1800	3150	4200	A	A

^cHouseparents required to "live in" compensated by being employed at one rank higher than usual.

^dWork nine months and paid for ten months.

Table 11 (continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
R	10	\$1600 + \$300	\$2700	\$2500	\$4100	B	S
S	10	1900	2400	2700	4500	B	B
T	9	1801	1801	2250	3600	A	
U	10	1800	2520	2520	3840	B	S
V	10	1500 + 300	2500	2300	4500	B	S
W	10	1300 + 500	1760	2700	4230	S	S
X	11	880 + 900	1200	1000 + \$900	1900	B	B
Y	9	1584	2484	3024	4800	S	B
Z	9	1325 + 300	1825	2955	4445	S	S
AA	9	1575	1665	3015	4815	B	B
BB	9	1215 + 360	2052	2340	3609	A	A
CC	9	1200 + 360	1500	1450 + 360	2900	B	S
DD	9	1170 + 360	1440	2340 + 360	3456	S	S

Table 11 (continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
EE	10	\$1485	\$1495	\$2000	\$3600	S	S
FF	9	1440	1620	2070	2250	S	S
GG	9	1000 + \$ 450	1500	1950	3500	B	B
HH	9	1080 + 360	1215	2250	3000	B	B
II	9	1035 + 400	1035	2400	3200	S	B
JJ	10	1035 + 270	2040	1800	3396		B

16 per cent of the institution salaries were above those paid locally; 36 per cent, paid their teachers the same; and 42 per cent, were below. Superintendents replied that they were paying above the state-wide average in 22 per cent of the institutions, 36 per cent were paying teachers below, and over 30 per cent were paying the same.

Nine of the upper 18 schools listed on Table 11 are regulated by state civil service policies. The 4 states paying the poorest salaries were not subject to the state civil service regulations. The personnel of only one of the 10 institutions reporting the lowest salaries paid to houseparents are under civil service.

The salary schedule may determine the length of service in this field as well as the type of applicant for the position. The compilation of Table 12 indicates that there is no particular longevity in the houseparent position since 50 per cent of those participating in this study¹ had had experience in institutions for 3 years or less.

Another factor which influences the type of personnel attracted to the houseparent position is the number of hours required to be on duty. Sixteen administrators noted that their houseparents were on duty 60 hours a week or less and 3 reported that their houseparents were on duty 5½ days. (See Table 13.) Six administrators scheduled houseparent duties for 40 hours or less each week.

¹The length of service in work with the blind was reported for houseparents during September 1955 as follows: Under one year - 18.6%; one year - 12.2%; two years - 12.2%; three years - 10%; four years - 8.4%; five years and up - 38.8%. See: U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Survey of Personnel Standards and Personnel Practices in Services for the Blind - 1955, Part I, (Dec. 1956), p. 83. (Table 49).

Table 12

YEARS OF HOUSEPARENT EXPERIENCE REPORTED BY HOUSEPARENTS

Years	Number of houseparents	Per cent
$\frac{1}{2}$	9	7.7
1	15	12.8
2	18	15.4
3	17	14.5
4	8	6.8
5	5	4.3
6	9	7.7
7	11	9.4
8	5	4.3
9	2	1.7
10	4	3.4
11	2	1.7
14	1	.8
15	1	.8
17	1	.8
20	3	2.6
22	2	1.7
23	1	.8
29	1	.8
No experience reported	2	1.7
Totals	117	99.7

Table 13
NUMBER OF DUTY HOURS ASSIGNED HOUSEPARENTS

Hours per week	Reported by Administrators		Reported by Houseparents	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Under 35		-	3	2.6
36 - 55	25	69.6	38	32.5
56 - 75	4	11.1	13	11.1
76 - 95	2	5.6	27	23.1
96 - 115	2	5.6	7	5.9
116 - 135			3	2.6
136 - 155	1	2.8	19	16.1
Above 156	1	2.8	2	1.7
Hours vary	1	2.8	5	4.3
Totals	36	100.3	117	99.9

The number of duty hours reported by houseparents varies from 40 hours per week (including time when the children were asleep) to 144 hours for 6 days, and, in two instances, 7 days per week were acknowledged. In contrast to those who reported they were on duty all of the time, over 30 per cent of the houseparents were on duty 50 hours or less each week.

When comparing the work week data reported by houseparents (Table 13) with that assigned by administrators, it is noted that the percentage of houseparents working less than 55 hours per week is

approximately one-half that reported by the administrators. This difference may be contributed to the administrator's failure to count all of the time spent with the children as duty time inasmuch as many houseparents are required to live in the dormitories and are on call most of the time. Several administrators' attitudes may be reflected by comments such as: "A real parent's work is never done", "houseparents have the children when they are not in school", "and a competent houseparent has to be there on the job more than 40 hours a week".¹

In some states, administrators recognized that houseparent duties may require more than 48 hours a week for adequate supervision of the children. These states continue to pay the houseparents during the summer for the overtime accumulated during the winter: i.e., one institution pays on the basis of a 40 hour week with 4 hours overtime; another pays the accumulated overtime of 10½ hours each week and an eastern state has adopted the 12 month pay method used for teachers. Three of the states employ their houseparents 12 months, two for 11 months, ten for 10 months.

Another estimate of the work load was determined by tabulating the number of children assigned to each houseparent. Difficulties arise for those houseparents who have a large number of small children to make ready for class, to groom for meals, or to supervise during the leisure time activities. Table 14 shows that over 12 per cent of the houseparents

¹Ibid. P. 67. "Ten percent of all employees in public agencies worked 60 hours or more compared with 2 percent in private agencies. These long hours are attributable to the houseparents who, in addition to being 'on duty' for long hours are also 'on call' twenty-four hours a day."

Table 14

NUMBER OF CHILDREN SUPERVISED BY EACH REPORTING HOUSEPARENT

Number of children	Number of houseparents	Per cent
Under 15	15	12.8
16 - 20	23	19.6
21 - 25	22	18.8
26 - 30	13	11.1
31 - 35	6	5.1
36 - 40	8	6.8
41 - 45	7	5.9
46 - 50	4	3.4
51 - 55	2	1.7
60	2	1.7
72	1	.9
85	1	.9
98	1	.9
100	2	1.7
None reported	10	8.5
Totals	117	99.8

were supervising groups of less than 15 children, 20 per cent cared for groups that had 16 to 20; almost as many had groups of 21 to 25, and 11 per cent of the houseparents had from 26 to 30 children assigned to their care. Those supervising 100, 98, and 85 children also indicated that they were relief houseparents.

For comparative purposes, the reported enrollments of 10 selected residential schools were utilized to determine the ratio of children to each houseparent. See Table 15 where the number of children per houseparent varied from 7.5 to 22.¹

With the advent of the shorter work week, there has been an increase in the number of houseparents caring for each child. The administrators of 22 institutions reported two houseparents supervise each child; at 3 schools one supervises the children; at 4 others, three different houseparents care for each child; and at 1 other, four houseparents. Additional variations were included in the replies: "two in girls' building, three in the boys' dormitory"; "two but can be as many as six"; ". . . at least two but more in some buildings". There were 2 reports reflecting that one, two, or three houseparents may supervise the same child depending upon the shift.

¹In the opinion of the administrators of schools for the deaf; 10 children, ages 5 to 8½ years, should be assigned to a housemother; while at the upper age levels, 17 to 21; the houseparent-pupil ratio should be 1 to 22 or 24 members in the unit. (E. E. Nelson, Historical Background of the Segregating of Deaf Children Into Groups in Public Residential Schools in the United States, Ogden, Utah: Utah School for the Deaf, 1953, p. 17). Burmeister also proposes that 10 small children are as many as one housemother should be expected to care for. (Eva Burmeister, Forty-Five in a Family, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 30).

Table 15

TOTAL ENROLLMENT COMPARED TO NUMBER OF HOUSEPARENTS IN TWENTY
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND^a

School	Total number houseparents	School enrollment	Number of children per houseparent
A	13	98	7.5
B	20	181	9.0
C	6	55	9.2
D	27	251	9.6
E	15	158	10.6
F	15	160	10.7
G	7	84	11.0
H	8	92	11.5
I	13	173	13.3
J	16	229	14.3
K	2	29	14.5
L	12	197	14.8
M	13	198	15.3
N	7	110	15.7
O	3	49	16.3
P	6	105	17.5
Q	7	130	18.6
R	8	158	19.8
S	6	129	21.5
T	2	44	22.0
Totals	254	2,630	Average 10.3

^aSchools do not have separate deaf or negro sections.

Irrespective of the number of children assigned to each houseparent, a capable supervisor is able to show houseparents techniques that work effectively with children, and encourage houseparents to become integral members of the institution staff.

Eleven administrators designated themselves as the houseparent supervisors while 7 assigned the supervisory duties to head houseparents. (See Table 16.) Four deans and 4 principals have the same responsibilities in their respective institutions and one administrator reported that there was no supervision of his houseparents.

The houseparents were asked to report the position of their supervisors to determine the persons responsible for the duty assignments of those participating in the survey. Over 40 per cent of the houseparents designated the superintendents as supervisors while 12 per cent reported that the head houseparent held that authority. (See Table 16.) In other replies the position of supervisor varied from psychologist to social worker, dean of students, and principal.

To explore the extent of communication with their supervisors, the houseparents were asked how often they confer with their supervisors. (See Table 17.) Over 52 per cent had no regularly scheduled conferences in contrast to the 4 per cent who had daily conferences with their supervisors, the 11 per cent who reported weekly sessions, and the 6 per cent who had one meeting monthly.

According to the administrators, the frequency of supervisory conferences varied from the daily to the annual incident. At 39 per cent of the institutions, irregular conferences were reported while almost

Table 16

STAFF POSITION OF HOUSEPARENT SUPERVISORS

Position of supervisor	Reported by Administrators		Reported by Houseparents	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Superintendent	11	30.5	47	40.2
Head houseparent	7	19.5	14	12.0
Dean	4	11.1	9	7.7
Principal or head teacher	4	11.1	9	7.7
Matron	3	8.3	9	7.7
Houseparent supervisor			9	7.7
Cottage supervisor	2	5.6	4	3.4
Psychologist			2	1.7
Social worker and psychologist	1	2.8		
Superintendent and matron	1	2.8		
Student director	1	2.8		
Social worker			1	.8
Chief recreational instructor			1	.8
Other houseparents			1	.8
No supervisor	1	2.8	3	2.6
No position reported	1	2.8	8	6.8
Totals	36	100.1	117	99.9

Table 17
FREQUENCY OF SUPERVISORY CONFERENCES

Conferences Scheduled:	Reported by Administrators		Reported by Houseparents	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Irregularly	14	39.0	57	48.6
Regularly	1	2.8		
Bi-monthly	2	5.6		
Monthly	10	27.8	7	5.9
Tri-weekly	1	2.8		
Bi-weekly	1	2.8		
Weekly	5	13.9	13	11.1
Thrice-weekly			3	2.6
Twice-weekly			6	5.1
Daily	1	2.8	5	4.3
Never			12	10.2
No report	1	2.8	14	12.0
Totals	36	100.3	117	99.8

50 per cent of the remaining superintendents scheduled monthly conferences.

Only 24 per cent of the houseparents had regular conferences with their supervisors concerning the problems of their children.

A probe into other types of conferences revealed that the case conference was used as a supervisory practice by 88 per cent of the administrators, and 75 per cent used the staff conference for training houseparents. At less than 6 per cent of the institutions, houseparents participated in the consideration of the pupil applicant although at 47 per cent they were included occasionally. By comparison, 76 per cent of the administrators included the houseparent in the conferences considering pupil dismissal.

Since lines of communication between supervisors and houseparents are not clearcut and with limited contact between the institution and the home, the type of information available to the houseparent may have a direct bearing upon child care. An opinion was expressed by one administrator that the houseparent must be professional in her attitude to have access to the records which may explain the nature of the replies tabulated on Table 18 regarding the availability of the files. Although no records were accessible to the houseparents in 2 institutions, at 7 others all files were available and at 3, the files were interpreted to the houseparents. Parent correspondence was the most accessible in 30 residential schools in contrast to only the medical reports available in one institution.

Discrepancies between the data compiled on Tables 18 and 19 indicate that many houseparents are not aware that files are available for their use. According to Table 19, difficulties may arise in locating

Table 18

TYPES OF DATA MADE AVAILABLE TO HOUSEPARENTS BY ADMINISTRATORS

Number of schools	Vital statistics	Periodic summaries of educational progress	Summaries of pertinent medical information	Summary of nature, cause, treatment of impairment	Social or field worker reports	Extract of field worker reports	Psychiatric reports	Parent correspondence	All records	No records	Other records
7									x		
2										x	
2								x			
2	x	x	x	x	x			x			
2	x		x	x	x		x	x			
2		x	x	x		x	x	x			
2	x	x	x	x				x			
1		x									
1	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o			
1	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	x			
1	x	a	x	x	x	x	o	x			c
1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
1	x	x	x	x	b	b	b	b			
1	x	b	b	b	x			x			
1	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			
1	x	x	x	x		x		x			
1	x	x	x	x		x		x			
1	x	x	x	x		x		x			
1	x		x	x	x			x			
1	x	x	x	x				x			
1	x		x	x				x			
1	x	x	x	x				x			
1	x							x			
1	x	x						x			
1	x							x			
1	o	o	o	o	o	o		x			
36	19	18	24	21	12	11	12	25	7	2	1

x Category of records available to houseparent.

o Category of records interpreted to houseparent.

a Houseparents given information from these records verbally.

b Category of records available to houseparents in some cases.

c Results of mental tests.

Table 19

TYPES OF DATA AVAILABLE TO REPORTING HOUSEPARENTS

Number of houseparents	Vital statistics	School records	Medical records	Summary of handicaps	Social worker reports	Psychiatric reports	Parents' letters	All records	No records	Other records	No reply
32									x		
11								x			
11							x				
5							x		x		
3	x										
3	x		x								
3		x		x							
3		x	x	x							
3		x		x			x				
2		x									
2			x								
2	x	x	x	x			x				
2			x	x			x				
2			x				x				
2	x		x	x	x	x	x				
2		x					x				
1				x							
1	x	x	x	x	x		x				
1	x	x	x	x	x						

Table 19 (continued)

Number of houseparents	Vital statistics	School records	Medical records	Summary of handicaps	Social worker reports	Psychiatric reports	Parents' letters	All records	No records	Other record	No reply
1	x	x	x			x	x				
1	x	x	x		x		x				
1					x	x	x				
1				x			x				
1	x						x				
1	x	x	x								
1	x	x		x	x	x	x				
1	x			x			x				
1		x		x							
1		x	x				x				
1	x	x	x				x				
1	x	x	x	x		x	x				
1			x		x		x				
1					x	x	x				
1							x			a	
1										b	
10											x
117	21	25	25	24	9	7	43	11	37	2	10

a - Houseparents given information from these records verbally.
b - Records available to houseparents in some cases.

helpful information because 27 per cent of the houseparent informants work where there were no files available to them compared with 9 per cent of the houseparents who noted that all of the records were placed at their service. Consistently houseparents listed parents' letters as their most frequent source of information.

In the opinion of 8 reporting houseparents all the records regarding the children should be made accessible to them. To summarize the various combinations of records desired: 22 houseparents mentioned medical records or histories; 9 wanted summaries of the cause, nature, and treatment of the handicapping condition; 8 would like social or field worker reports available and 8 listed psychiatric reports.

If the houseparents are to use the records regarding the youngsters, to what extent do the houseparents contribute to those records? Fourteen of the 36 administrators reported that houseparents make written reports of child behavior for the information of the staff, while another nine indicated that the houseparents make the written reports upon request. In one institution, the psychologist recorded the results of houseparent conferences. The houseparents, too, were asked if they were required to record their observations regarding the children. Of the replies, 42 per cent were expected to post their observations while 51 per cent were not. Two houseparents summarized records 3 times a year; another posted observations 2 times a year; one, every 6 weeks. One housemother noted that she had a diary with daily entries. Of the houseparents, 61 per cent asserted that their summaries about children were included in the home report while the summaries of 27 per cent were not.

Table 20

STAFF MEMBERS MOST OFTEN CONTACTED BY PARENTS OF
CHILDREN ENROLLED IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND

Personnel most often contacted	Number of schools	Per cent
Houseparents	19	52.8
Superintendent and houseparent	3	8.3
Superintendent only	2	5.6
Principal and houseparent	2	5.6
Superintendent, principal, and houseparent	2	5.6
Matron	1	2.8
Principal and houseparent supervisor	1	2.8
School hostess	1	2.8
Dean	1	2.8
Teacher and houseparent	1	2.8
Social worker and houseparent	1	2.8
Varies - depending upon pupil	1	2.8
No personnel reported	1	2.8
Totals	36	100.0

With limited records available to the houseparents, they are compelled to seek information through personal, informal lines of communication. According to Table 20 houseparents are the staff persons most often contacted by the children's parents in one-half of the institutions but it

is also noted on Table 21 that at 8 per cent of the institutions, the houseparent does not meet with the parents; in 19 per cent, the meeting is a rare occasion and at 47 per cent the frequency of these contacts is variable.

Table 21

FREQUENCY OF CONTACT BETWEEN HOUSEPARENTS AND PARENTS OF CHILDREN
ENROLLED IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND

Contact Interval	Number of schools	Per cent
Varies	17	47.3
Rarely	7	19.5
Weekly	6	16.7
No contact	3	8.3
Monthly	1	2.8
No interval reported	2	5.6
Totals	36	100.2

Although the home and institution relationships are deemed important, only one administrator reported an annual visit to each home and 11 per cent of the others noted that staff members do not visit the homes of their enrollees. The superintendents of 2 institutions reported that they visit the homes of the enrollees, while at the other schools these visits are distributed among various staff members. In one instance, the selection of the staff member to make the visitation is determined by the needs of the pupil.

Table 22

PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLEES HOMES VISITED ANNUALLY BY STAFF MEMBERS
OF THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND

Percent of homes visited	Number of schools	Per cent
0	4	11.1
1 - 10	8	22.3
11 - 20	4	11.1
21 - 30	2	5.6
41 - 50	5	13.9
71 - 80	3	8.3
91 - 100	1	2.8
Very low	1	2.8
Varies	4	11.1
No reply	2	11.1
Totals	36	97.3

From Table 22 it is estimated that in over one-third of the institutions, staff personnel visit less than 10 per cent of the children's homes annually and this is done most frequently by either the administrator or the field social worker in more than half of the institutions.

(See Table 23.)

Table 23

POSITION OF STAFF MEMBER VISITING HOMES OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL
FOR THE BLIND ENROLLEES

Home most often visited by:	Number of schools	Per cent
Social worker (case, field)	8	22.3
School administrator	7	19.5
Home visitor or visiting teacher	2	5.6
Principal and superintendent	2	5.6
Superintendent and field representative	2	5.6
Dean	1	2.8
Superintendent, teacher, or houseparent	1	2.8
Superintendent, teacher, houseparent, or field worker	1	2.8
Principal	1	2.8
Teachers	1	2.8
Principal and teachers	1	2.8
Designated staff member	2	5.6
No one	6	16.7
No reply	1	2.8
Totals	36	100.5

Houseparent Opinions

Few sources disclose houseparent attitudes toward their duties and their position in the institutional staff structure. The houseparent's attitude toward her role is dependant, in part, upon her experience and attitude when she comes to the institution and the duties that are assigned to that particular position. In the last four years, houseparents of blind children have attempted to define their roles at the 1954 and 1956 conventions of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind, where, using workshop techniques, the houseparents explored their relationships with other members of the staff and the children's parents; their attitudes toward blindness; the mechanics of institution life; and the need for mental hygiene procedures in the dormitories and cottages.^{1,2}

To determine the attitudes of the houseparents toward their duties and their position, the 117 participants of this study were requested to check items comparing the houseparent function with other selected roles. Table 24 reveals that almost 44 per cent of the houseparents felt they were acting in the capacity of a substitute parent. Although the spread of selection indicates that their roles may not be clearly defined, houseparents (91 per cent) agree that their contribution to the over-all adjustment of the blind child is as valuable as that of the teachers.

¹Catherine Weldon, "Houseparents", Forty-Second Convention of American Association of Instructors of the Blind, June 27 - July 1, 1954, pp. 56 - 60.

²Ada Church, "Houseparents (Grade School)", Lulu Hanson, "Houseparents Junior and Senior High", Forty-Third Convention of American Association of Instructors of the Blind, June 24-28, 1956, pp. 82-84.

Table 24

ATTITUDE TOWARD POSITION REPORTED BY HOUSEPARENTS

Number	Per cent	Houseparent is most like:								
		Glorified housekeeper	Counselor	Substitute parent	Guide for children	Leader of children	Guardian of children	Teacher of children	All categories	Other
51	43.6			x						
6	5.1								x	
6	5.1	x								
6	5.1		x							
6	5.1					x				
6	5.1		x	x	x	x	x	x		
3	2.6			x	x					
3	2.6			x			x			
3	2.6		x		x					
3	2.6			x				x		
2	1.7		x	x		x		x		
2	1.7		x	x						
2	1.7					x				
1	.8				x					
1	.8							x		
1	.8		x	x	x	x		x		
1	.8		x	x	x			x		
1	.8	x		x	x		x			
1	.8	x	x	x	x	x				
1	.8		x	x	x	x				
1	.8		x	x	x		x			
1	.8			x	x	x				
1	.8	x		x	x		x	x		
1	.8		x		x	x				
1	.8			x	x		x			
1	.8		x					x		
1	.8			x	x	x				
1	.8	x	x		x		x			
1	.8									a
1	.8							no response		
17	100.6	10	27	81	26	23	16	16	6	1

a - Companion to children

To further explore attitudes regarding their work, houseparents were asked to record factors that interfere with their duties. Whereas 9 per cent reported no difficulties, 12 per cent noted that their hours were too long, another 10 per cent replied that there were too many children placed under their care and 3 per cent proposed that the ranges of children's ages in each group were too wide for adequate care and supervision. Lack of cooperation among staff members was indicated by 12 per cent of the houseparents; only 3 per cent of the houseparents noted the close confinement of their work, and the same number depicted inaccessibility of information as contributing to their difficulties.

Further duties which interfered with the performance of the houseparents were: mending, maid's work, household details, substituting for the cook on the cook's day off, playground duties, evening study hall, and nursing the children, who, when ill, were required to stay in the dormitory.

Where several houseparents (8 per cent) contended that lack of support in their discipline of the children interfered with their duties, altogether 54 per cent of the houseparents required help in handling behavior problems as compared to 22 per cent who did not and another 9 per cent who needed aid intermittently.

When the houseparents were asked to name their sources of help with behavior problems in the dormitory, the replies indicate that 28 per cent contact the institution administrator; 14 per cent visit either the superintendent or the principal; the same per cent confer with the dean of the school; and 11 per cent go to either the principal or the supervising teacher. (See Table 25.) Regarding assistance from the faculty, 62 per

Table 25

SOURCE OF ASSISTANCE WITH BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS --REPORTED BY HOUSEPARENTS

Staff Position	Number of houseparents	Per cent
Institution administrator	33	28.2
Superintendent and principal	16	13.7
Dean	16	13.7
Principal or supervisory teacher	13	11.1
Houseparent supervisor	8	6.7
Teachers	3	2.6
Matron	3	2.6
Social worker or psychologist	2	1.7
Superintendent, principal supervisor	1	.8
Superintendent, teacher, head houseparent	1	.8
Superintendent or men in cottage	1	.8
Social worker	1	.8
Male teacher	1	.8
Physical education instructor	1	.8
Superintendent or houseparent supervisor	1	.8
Principal or psychologist	1	.8
Teachers, other houseparents, and nurse	1	.8
Number not reporting	14	12.0
Totals	117	99.5

cent of the houseparents confer with the teachers concerning the problems of the children.

Cumulative records on each pupil enrolled at the residential school for the blind could be another source of support to the houseparent for according to Table 26, more information about the child's health and home background would be of assistance to 97 houseparents.

In addition to the helpful previous experience reported on page 17, the houseparents suggested the types of experience that should help them. Although over 35 per cent did not respond to the inquiry; 20 per cent wanted more courses that include an introduction to behavior and child welfare studies. Handcraft skills would be of service to 3 per cent and a like number wanted additional experience with music. Visits to other institutions were desired by 3 per cent and guidance conferences would have assisted 2 per cent. Where 3 per cent desired social work experience, the same per cent proposed nursing; 2 per cent advocated teaching and parenthood would have helped 3 per cent.

The houseparents may become discouraged in their work and in their attempts to improve the situation in which they find themselves unless the suggestions presented to superiors are given consideration. Such attention was reported by 60 per cent of the houseparents; and 8 per cent responded that their suggestions were granted an occasional trial, while 11 per cent reported that theirs were given none.

Summary

The foregoing compilation suggests that the typical houseparent is a woman over 50 years of age who is often a widow. She has had less than

Table 26

INFORMATION DESIRED BY REPORTING HOUSEPARENTS

	Number of houseparents
Information regarding:	
Home background of children.....	33
Physical background of children.....	25
Family background of children.....	12
Case histories of children.....	27
Mental capacities of children.....	5
Personalities of children.....	6
School problems and progress of children.....	2
Previous academic progress of children.....	1
Eating habits of children.....	2
Age and personal habits of children.....	1
Causes of handicaps of the children.....	3
Dormitory adjustment of children.....	1
Information from:	
Psychiatric reports.....	3
Social workers reports.....	1
Reports to parents.....	4
General information.....	4
Same information given teachers and field workers.....	1
All information desired now available.....	3
No information needed.....	1
Total responses	135
No responses	14

3 years of institutional experience and has completed the twelfth grade.

The houseparent is required to be on duty more than 48 hours a week with 23 children, on the average, assigned to her care. The houseparent feels that she acts in the capacity of a substitute parent and makes as valuable a contribution to the over-all adjustment of the child as the teacher although she receives about two-thirds the salary paid teachers at the same institution.

Supervision is usually by the superintendent through irregularly scheduled conferences that are utilized for in-service training. In addition, the houseparent seeks assistance from other staff members to cope with dormitory behavior problems. The houseparent is most often contacted by enrollee's parents on visits to the institution but seldom has the opportunity to visit in the homes of the children because staff member visits to the homes are limited.

The houseparent has restricted use of the records concerning the children and seldom contributes to these files. In her opinion, she needs more information regarding the health and families of the children placed under her supervision.

The houseparent has found teaching experience and child rearing to be helpful in her present position. Since no formal houseparent training is available, she would like to enroll in child behavior, welfare, and psychology courses.

CHAPTER III

TRAINING THE HOUSEPARENT

Because the limitations of budgets and unavailability of applicants prevent the employment of fully qualified houseparents, all that can be expected is to hire houseparents with affection for children and personalities that please youngsters; in-service training and outstanding supervision will be required to develop the needed skills. To what extent, then, are training opportunities available to houseparents?

Only 33 per cent of the administrators reported in-service training and of the houseparents queried, 45 per cent did not answer and another 33 per cent indicated that there was no training available to them. Over 10 per cent of the houseparents had attended workshop conferences, another 4 per cent counted the institute for the parents of pre-school blind children as part of their in-service training, and 3 per cent indicated that they had participated in study groups. The second reported pattern of training included courses in subject areas ranging from socio-economics to child care and practical nursing. The third pattern offered the houseparent the opportunity to develop recreational activities; i.e., photo coloring, music, industrial crafts, field trips, and church meetings.

Conferences with superintendents, the University of Minnesota correspondence course on child care, and college lecture courses were listed as the primary training methods by houseparents. Of secondary importance were the conferences with the principals, the houseparent

Table 27

TRAINING ACTIVITIES SPONSORED FOR HOUSEPARENTS
REPORTED AND RATED BY ADMINISTRATORS

Activities	Rated most successful	Rated next successful	Rated third successful	Total number using activity
Supervisory conferences	6 (1) ^a	1	2	17 (2)
Case conferences	2	3	2 (1)	17 (1)
Workshops	2	1	1	9 (3)
Novice Orientation	1	2 (1)	3	13 (1)
Lectures		(1)	2	10 (3)
Education movies		1	2	9
Internship		1	1	3
Institute	(1)	1	1	6 (3)
In-service training				2
Visit other institutions				1
No answers				14

^a Number in () indicates the number of institutions sponsoring training under other auspices.

participation in teachers' meetings, and the regional workshop sessions.

Among the superintendents, not only was the supervisory conference utilized for training by most but this technique was considered the most successful. Case conferences were listed as next successful and novice orientation was third. (See Table 27.) Workshops and institutes were the major group training activities sponsored by schools for the blind.

To differentiate houseparent attitudes about further training, houseparents were asked how they might secure supplemental training. More than 60 per cent indicated that they would need more training and 44 per cent were willing to take it even if they were required to use their "own time off". (See Table 28.) Twice as many houseparents would take the training on their "time off" as those who would only take the training if it were counted as part of their work. Although 9 per cent contended that they had enough; another 18 per cent, who had sufficient training, indicated they would take more.

When the houseparents were asked how they might go about improving their skill, 37 per cent offered no suggestions; 26 per cent would rely upon formal lecture courses; 9 per cent would utilize reading lists, the same number, conference workshops and 4 per cent, in-service training. There were those (3 per cent) who would spend more time observing the youngsters to improve their skill; the same number who would welcome the opportunity to exchange ideas with other houseparents and another 4 per cent who would gain by visiting other institutions.

Staff members designated to supervise the orientation of the houseparents were: superintendents, deans, principals, head teachers.

Table 28

HOUSEPARENT OPINIONS CONCERNING ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Number of houseparents	Per cent	Have enough	Need more	Take training if available	Take training on "time off"	Take training during scheduled duty hours	Not reported
10	8.5	x					
12	10.2		x				
14	12.0		x	x	x		
14	12.0		x	x		x	
8	6.8	x		x	x		
7	5.9		x	x			
7	5.9		x	x	x	x	
6	5.1		x				
5	4.3			x	x	x	
4	3.4			x	x		
4	3.4	x				x	
3	2.6	x		x			
3	2.6		x	x	x	x	
3	2.6		x		x		
3	2.6		x		x		
2	1.7	x	x		x	x	
2	1.7	x		x		x	
2	1.7	x		x	x	x	
2	1.7			x		x	
1	.8					x	
2	1.7						x
117	99.8	31	71	71	51	45	2
Percent of total houseparents		26.4	60.7	60.7	43.6	38.5	1.7

a matron, a houseparent, a business manager, a storekeeper, a psychologist, a nurse, and a student director.

As one administrator noted, the orientation to the new job was dependent upon the training and the previous experience of the novice. Of the administrators, 21 per cent utilized orientation techniques by personal conferences with the staff and in 11 per cent of the institutions there was training on the job; such as, close supervision for the first week by the matron, the older teachers, or houseparents. Two of the superintendents employed new houseparents in relief positions while another 2 placed the novices with the experienced houseparents. In 4 of the institutions, there were houseparent-teacher conferences; others reported that their houseparents participated in the institute for the parents of pre-school children; and at another, the annual parent-teacher institute included the houseparents.

Of the reporting institutions, 17 per cent had mimeographed handbooks that were given to the houseparents as soon as they came to the staff. Administrators reported that 75 per cent of the institutions have staff libraries.

Rapport among individual staff members may increase communication and accelerate informal training. Primarily, houseparents in one-third of the institutions were integrated with the rest of the staff through social activities. Seven administrators noted that staff meetings assisted houseparents to unite with the staff. In 5 institutions, the houseparents met with the teachers at the faculty meetings; in one instance, weekly. Two administrators listed visits to school classes and attendance at school events as aids to houseparents. Houseparents

were reported to be working on staff-wide committees regarding common problems to the institution and were discussion leaders in study groups.

Summary

Even though formal training is not available to those preparing to be houseparents only one-third of the administrators reported in-service training programs. The supervisory conference was rated as the most successful training activity by the administrators. Houseparents reported that they have participated in workshops, institutes for parents of pre-school blind children, correspondence courses, and lectures in connection with their in-service training.

Slightly less than 27 per cent of the houseparents credit themselves with enough training for the position. The majority of the remaining houseparents would participate in additional training during their leisure time. Although houseparents wish to improve their skills, one-third do not know how to proceed. Among the variety of approaches proposed, approximately one-fourth suggested formal lectures.

There are not well defined programs for new staff orientation in the residential schools for the blind.

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAFF IMPROVEMENT

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the houseparent may be assigned diversified duties requiring long hours and is compensated by a limited salary. The conditions of work for the houseparent position are not attractive to persons with sufficient training and experience to cope with the problems presented by the children. The recruitment problems must be faced squarely by institution personnel for, in the opinion of the administrators, they are the most instrumental in locating houseparent applicants. (See Table 29.)

What then, are the minimum qualifications for the position, if personnel and adequate funds were available to attract desirable persons to the staff? Recommendations for houseparent qualifications, conditions of employment, and staff improvement were requested from administrators in residential schools for the blind. The data presented in this chapter are compiled from the 34 administrators who responded to Questionnaire III. (See Appendix C.)

Although concern has been expressed regarding the age of houseparents in that often the children are being reared by grandparents, a maximum age of 65 years was recommended by 41 per cent of the respondents. (See Table 30.) One administrator replied that the minimum age should be 21 years, 38 per cent proposed an age of 25 years, and 9 per cent advised that the minimum age for a houseparent should be limited to 40 years.

Table 29

SOURCES OF HOUSEPARENT APPLICANTS

	Number of opinions
Applicant secured through:	
Recruitment by administrators	8
Response to advertisements	6
Referral by government employment service	3
Referral by private employment service	1
Referral by church	1
Referral by staff	4
Referral by interested persons	3
Applications by:	
Widows	5
Ex-teachers	3
Personnel trained in child guidance	1
Practical nurses	1
Married couples	1
Single ladies	1
Alumni	1
Staff promotion	1
No particular source	1
No response	6
Total	47

Table 30

RECOMMENDED AGE RANGE FOR HOUSEPARENTS

Opinion	Minimum Age	Maximum Age	Opinion	Minimum Age	Maximum Age
A	21	a	P	30	60
B	22 - 25	65	Q	30	60
C	25	50 ^b	R	30	60
D	25	65	S	30	50
E	25	60	T	30	55
F	25	65	U	30	60 - 65
G	25	65	V	30	65
H	25	65	W	35	60
I	25	65	X	30	65
J	25	65	Y	35	65
K	25	65	Z	28	70
L	25	70	AA	40	60
M	26	65	BB	40	65
N	25	70	CC	40	70
O	30	60	DD	25	c

^aAs old as is physically able.

^bNo applicant for the position should be older than 55.

^cLimit should be set only by ability to perform satisfactorily.

Further recommendations for the position may be contingent upon the importance assigned the houseparents' contribution to the overall adjustment and growth of the blind child, for all but 2 of the administrators agree, that the contribution of houseparents should be as important as that made by teachers. This recommendation is in contrast to replies by 33 per cent of the administrators who contended, that at the present time, the contribution by the houseparent is less than that of the teachers and 56 per cent who replied that the houseparent contribution is equal that of the teachers.

One administrator was of the opinion that there was no high correlation between success as a houseparent and the degree of education, and another administrator proposed that when a professional status is given to motherhood, special college training would be desirable. He would rather employ a well-balanced experienced mother, quite independent of whether or not she had college training, than someone with a doctor's degree who was not otherwise suited to the work.

The remaining administrators reported specific minimum qualifications of education. Two were of the opinion that qualifications should be the same as for teachers; 11 felt that college degrees would be necessary; 11 advised that 2 years of college with special training in the areas of child-care and social development of youngsters would be very helpful. Fifteen respondents proposed high school graduation as minimum qualification; one placed the minimum educational qualification as graduation from the ninth grade.

Since considerable training may be required to orient new houseparents, opinions regarding the "trainability" of the married as

compared to the single person were sought. According to 12 per cent of the respondents it is more difficult to train married than single persons to be adequate houseparents. However, 32 per cent answered that it was not, 14 per cent declared that it depends upon the individual involved, and 38 per cent did not reply.

The extent and type of training scheduled for houseparents may be limited by the experience that the houseparent had when she joined the staff. When listing the minimum experience qualifications, there were administrators who contended that experience was not important, with selection depending upon the individual person. One noted that some of his best houseparents had no experience before they had come to him. Concurrently, however, it was pointed up by other administrators that experience with children having no primary handicap was a necessary experience requirement. The number of years varied from one to three. Two superintendents proposed that ideally one year as a relief houseparent would be of considerable assistance.

Even though 3 superintendents preferred individuals who had taught or who had been in personnel service, there was a tendency to emphasize experience with small children as a necessary requisite for the houseparent. Seven of the administrators proposed that the valuable experience of group work would be of assistance and might include one or more years of youth counseling in summer camp or playground supervision. Ten administrators suggested that 2 years with handicapped children would be a desirable qualification for the houseparent position.

Twelve administrators placed the rearing of a successful family as a minimum qualification for the houseparent and as one explained,

that if he had to hire a grandparent, he determined how successfully the applicant had reared her own children.

In considering the characteristics necessary for persons employed as houseparents of blind children, administrators repeatedly stressed affection for children, patience, tact, and the ability to cooperate with their colleagues. The houseparent needs good health to have a stamina that can keep up with the children that will be under her care and should have a voice reflecting a pleasant stable personality. Houseparents should have the ability to evaluate the job to be done and be able to meet, talk, and counsel with parents. One administrator proposed that they should have the ability to assume responsibility for the complete home life of the children, to assist with their moral and social training, to supervise the children in their work and play, and to have the competencies required for group leadership.

Regularly, administrators proposed that the qualifications of houseparents in the matter of training and experience be on an equal basis with that of teachers. Specifically, administrators advised that houseparents should have the ability to organize the children's time, to introduce them to social graces, to sew, and to play the piano.

When the superintendents were asked to identify the qualifications for the houseparents who would be supervising children of different age levels, 8 administrators proposed general qualifications for the 3 age categories listed. Others proposed that the houseparents for children under 7 years of age should be persons of considerable patience, to be physically able to lift the children, and should have a particular knowledge of child growth and development, psychology, and discipline.

Administrators proposed that houseparents be intelligent and motherly with children, be kind in a firm disciplined manner, systematic, orderly, a "stickler" for cleanliness, and punctual in all matters. There was the opinion that with children under 7 years of age it would be an asset for the houseparent to be a good storyteller.

For those children between the ages of 7 and 12; the houseparent should be physically capable to join the children in their activities and to be mentally alert to cope with the questioning mind.

For those supervising children from 12 years and up, the administrators were of the opinion that there should be an understanding of adolescent problems and proposed that those houseparents should be younger than the average. This age requires one who can challenge the mentally alert with a tolerance of the adolescent foibles; one who can appeal to grownup ideals, but who has a social ease with minors; one who can plan parties and understands the techniques of fostering constructive boy-girl relationships.

There has been the question of the relative success of a single woman in the role of the houseparent. Items 6 and 7 of Questionnaire III solicited the opinions with regard to the utilization of married persons as houseparents. (See Appendix C.) Of the administrators, 38 per cent replied that married couples were more successful than 2 single persons in the same dormitory; 26 per cent responded that they were not; and 29 per cent proposed that competency depends upon the individual houseparent.

Are persons who were or had been married more successful as houseparents than those who had not been? Of the 34 administrators,

46 per cent thought that married couples were definitely more successful, 17 per cent answered that they were not more successful, and 35 per cent were of the opinion that performance depends upon the individual.

The administrators were asked if persons who had reared children proved to be the more successful houseparents. The majority of the administrators were of the opinion that these persons were more successful as houseparents, 14 per cent answered "no", and 12 per cent of the superintendents proposed that it depends entirely upon the individual rather than their child-care experience.

Undoubtedly there are persons with the above qualifications who are not interested in the houseparent profession because of the limitations imposed by the conditions of employment. (See Table 31.)

Table 31

MAJOR OBSTACLES IN SECURING SATISFACTORY HOUSEPARENTS

Type of Obstacle	Concurring Opinions
Low salaries.	25
Long work hours	10
Training personnel unavailable.	6
Position status considered low.	2
Placement agencies unavailable.	2
Duties unattractive	2
Inadequate job analysis	1
Personnel unwilling to "live in".	1
Unsuitable housing for married couples.	1
Inadequate training program	1
Prevalent attitude toward blind	1
Location of institution (rural)	1
Duties cause confinement.	1
No obstacle reported.	1
Total	55

Table 32

SUGGESTED METHODS TO IMPROVE HOUSEPARENT COMPETENCY

Method	Rated:			
	Most Likely	Next Likely	Third or Less Likely	Total Opinions
<u>Administrative</u>				
Provide adequate salaries	10	2	1	13
Upgrade profession status	1		4	5
Provide salary increases for professional improvement		4		4
Reduce work schedule	1		3	4
Carefully screen applicants	1	1	1	3
Raise academic requirements for applicants		3	1	4
Provide guidance	1	1	2	
Utilize suggestions from ex-houseparents		1		1
Encourage houseparents to observe children's attitudes		1		1
Provide experience in field		1		1
Develop institution staff cooperation			4	4
Schedule regular			2	2

Table 32 (continued)

Method	-Rated:			
	Most Likely	Next Likely	Third or Less Likely	Total Opinions
Provide opportunities for houseparents to exchange ideas			2	2
Relieve houseparents of menial tasks			1	1
Provide suggestion box			1	1
Replace unqualified houseparents			1	1
Reduce confinement of houseparents during "off" hours				1
<u>Training</u> Provide in-service training	7	8	1	17
Provide conference for houseparents	2			2
Provide lectures on child development and care	1	1	1	3
Provide selected reading courses		1	1	2
Provide courses on child psychology		1	1	2
Subsidize training (scholarships)		1	1	2
Provide courses on child psychology		1	1	2
Encourage houseparents to travel			1	1
Provide houseparent institutes				1

In the opinion of the superintendents, low salaries are the greatest obstacle to securing competent houseparents, with the long work schedules, inadequate training, the type of duties required of houseparents, and the institution climate (the housing and the confinement of the position) interfering with the recruitment of capable persons.

Among procedures by which the obstacles may be eliminated, salary increases were not only mentioned most often, but were rated as the most promising. (See Table 32) Where the beginning salary is in excess of \$3000 for nine months of employment, the administrator has a waiting list of applicants even though he requires two years of college training.

To reduce the principal obstacle, over 58 per cent of the administrators recommended salaries equal to that of teachers and 26 per cent, salaries equal to nurses or social workers. (See Table 33.)

Table 33

RECOMMENDED SALARIES FOR HOUSEPARENTS

Salary equal to:	Number of Opinions	Per cent
Teachers	20	58.7
Nurses	5	14.5
Social workers	3	8.7
Two-thirds of teachers	1	2.9
Domestics	1	2.9
\$250 a month	1	2.9
Dependent upon qualifications	1	2.9
No opinion	2	5.8
Totals	34	99.3

Another factor in the recruitment and retention of houseparents is the number of duty hours required each week. The administrators varied in their recommendations, for 23 per cent advocated 40 hours or less per week, and 62 per cent proposed a work week of 50 hours or less. (See Table 34.)

In view of the list of duties reported by houseparents as interfering with performance (see page 47) the superintendents were asked if the houseparent should be relieved of housekeeping duties. The duties should be eased according to 68 per cent of the respondents and houseparents might be aided by the assignment of routine cleaning, mending, dishwashing, cooking, and heavy housekeeping to other institution workers. There were recommendations that houseparents be relieved of all housekeeping and dining hall duties except emergency tasks, the care of clothing, and the supervision of the housekeeper.

Upgrading, professional status, more careful screening of applicants, and reducing the work schedule are within administrative purview. Without an intensive analysis of each institution, difficulties arise when determining the most efficient assignment of duties. Equitable adjustment of the workload is dependent upon capable supervision. The recommendations for the supervisor of houseparents follow the similar pattern previously reported by the administrators except for the position of the principal. (See Tables 35 and 16.) The suggestion that the houseparents be largely supervised by a professionally trained social group worker was disregarded by all but 4 respondents.

Improvement of the supervisory function by developing inter-staff cooperation and regularity in staff meetings was also recommended. The

Table 34

RECOMMENDED DUTY HOURS FOR HOUSEPARENTS

Hours on Duty Each Week	Number of Opinions	Per cent
Thirty	1	2.9
Thirty-five	1	2.9
Forty	6	17.4
Forty to Fifty	3	8.7
More than Forty	1	2.9
Forty-four	1	2.9
Forty-eight	4	11.6
Fifty	2	5.8
Fifty-six	1	2.9
Fifty-five to Sixty	1	2.9
Sixty (included sleeping time)	1	2.9
Sixty to Eighty	1	2.9
Seventy to Eighty	1	2.9
Off 1½ days a week	2	5.8
Off 1 day a week	1	2.9
No opinions reported	7 .	20.3
Totals	34	98.6

Table 35

RECOMMENDED SUPERVISOR OF HOUSEPARENTS

Position	Number of Opinions	Per cent
Institution administrator	11	31.9
Houseparent supervisor	6	17.4
Matron	5	14.5
Dean	3	8.7
Principal or head teacher	1	2.9
Social worker	1	2.9
Director of student welfare	2	5.8
Social worker and psychologist	1	2.9
Superintendent and school nurse	1	2.9
Superintendent, business manager and head matron	1	2.9
No recommendation	2	5.8
Totals	34	98.6

respondents (97 per cent) proposed that houseparents should attend staff meetings and over 94 per cent would invite houseparents to the case conferences. Moreover, 41 per cent advocated weekly supervisory conferences; while 53 per cent recommended monthly supervisory conferences as adequate.

Another type of conference was considered when the administrators were asked to register their opinions as to whether or not the houseparent should be a member of the pupil enrollment conference. There were 38 per cent in favor, 35 per cent opposed, and 20 per cent indicated that houseparents should be consulted in special cases. Another respondent observed that capabilities of the houseparent would determine her inclusion in such a conference.

Although 94 per cent advocated houseparent participation in conferences with parents, 27 per cent maintained that houseparents should not visit the homes of children placed in their care. Slightly less than 75 per cent of the administrators are of the opinion that houseparents should visit the homes of the enrollees. (See Table 36.)

Table 36

HOME VISIT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOUSEPARENTS

Should Enrollees' Homes be Visited?	Number of Opinions	Per cent
Yes	2	5.8
Yes, but impractical	8	23.5
Visit as much as possible	5	14.7
Visit as feasible	5	14.7
Visit occasionally	3	8.8
Visit twice a year	2	5.8
No visits	9	26.5
Total	34	99.8


Data summarized on Table 22 indicates that now home visitation is limited and the houseparents are compelled to rely upon other sources for information regarding the children. Administrator replies make it apparent that houseparents should have more records available to them than has been formerly placed at their service. (See Table 37.) Only 12 per cent would limit the houseparents to 4 record categories or less.

Furthermore, 80 per cent of the superintendents proposed that houseparents should contribute written reports to the files and 12 per cent advised that houseparents should be required to make reports of children on special occasions. When the administrators were requested to indicate the most desirable observation report, there was a variety of replies. Although no suggestions were made by one-third of the administrators, 14 per cent advocated reports on child growth; on child behavior in the dormitory, on the playground, and at the table; on morals and attitudes; on progress and discipline. One noted that reports should be evaluated by a psychologist.

Verbal reporting was proposed by 20 per cent of the administrators and among the suggested written reports, a log with daily entries was included. Weekly reports as well as daily reports were advocated. Anecdotal, comprehensive, and informal reports were proposed, with one request--that reports be simple and specific.

Summary

In view of the importance assigned the houseparents' contribution to the overall adjustment and growth of blind children, the administrators recommended the following:



1. Houseparents should be between 25 and 65 years of age.
2. Houseparent applicants should have at least 2 years of training beyond secondary school.
3. Two years of child care experience would be desirable for applicant.
4. Houseparents' salaries should be within the range paid teachers, nurses, or social workers.
5. The houseparent work schedule should require less than 50 hours a week.
6. Houseparents should be relieved of housekeeping duties.
7. In-service training and inter-staff cooperation should be developed for houseparents.
8. Staff meetings should be used for houseparent training purposes.
9. Houseparents should attend staff meetings and be invited to case conferences and consultations with parents.
10. Houseparents should visit the homes of the children whenever possible.
11. More information concerning the children should be made available to the houseparents.

Even though qualifications for the position should vary with the age of the children to be supervised the majority of administrators proposed that the most successful houseparents were drawn from those applicants who had reared their own children.

CHAPTER V

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HOUSEPARENT COMPETENCY

Although census-like information may contribute to a skeletal job description of the houseparent position and the foregoing recommendations may direct attention toward improvement in the conditions of employment, a well defined description includes an evaluation of the contributing skills and abilities required of the persons caring for the children. Therefore, opinions were sought from child-care authorities and co-workers with houseparents through the distribution of a fourth questionnaire which was constructed by utilizing items drawn from the literature that included observations about the characteristics and performances of successful houseparents. (See Appendix B.) This questionnaire was sent to those who are identified with either child-care or the education of blind children, of whom 44 per cent (45) returned usable replies.

The houseparent co-workers and child-care authorities evaluated the selected items by rating each as to its contribution toward the competency of houseparents. The participants were also requested to report the frequency that the characteristic was found among successful houseparents, of which, 43 of the 45 respondents reported usable data. Over half of the respondents had from 5 through 11 years of experience with houseparents and more than half rated 50 per cent or more of the houseparents as successful. (See Table 38 and 39.)

Table 38

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WITH HOUSEPARENTS REPORTED
BY CHILD-CARE AUTHORITIES AND HOUSEPARENT COWORKERS

Years	Number of Respondents	Per cent
1 - 5	10	22.1
6 - 10	15	33.2
11 - 15	8	17.7
16 - 20	4	8.8
21 - 40	3	6.6
No reply	5	11.1
Totals	45	99.5

The subjective nature of the opinions sought imposed upon this investigation limitations common to all opinion studies. The influence of the undetermined factors upon the data was difficult to ascertain.

The data was affected by:

1. Participants who assigned diverse meanings to terms.
2. Items which included unfamiliar words that obscured meanings for some respondents.
3. The tendency to agree with what seems professionally desirable.
4. The lack of definitiveness in the use of terms "successful", "competent", "status", "performance", which caused difficulty in obtaining a particular response to a particular statement.

Since some areas are more amenable to treatment than others, an

Table 39

PER CENT OF HOUSEPARENTS RATED SUCCESSFUL

Per cent rated successful:	By Coworkers and Child-care Authorities	
	Number	Per cent
0 - 9	1	2.2
10 - 19	1	2.2
20 - 29	4	8.8
30 - 39	2	4.4
40 - 49	2	4.4
50 - 59	9	19.9
60 - 69	1	2.2
70 - 79	8	17.7
80 - 89	2	4.4
90 - 100	4	8.8
No reply	11	24.4
Totals	45	99.4

analysis of the data compiled on Table 40 directs attention to selected items which may be significant for staff selection and training. Completion of high school by houseparents was emphasized by the respondents. Although very few successful houseparents had taken training beyond high school, two years of college courses were also recommended.

Of all the categories presented in the fourth questionnaire, the largest percentage of respondents failed to rate the items detailing specific experience. However, among the types of experience listed, the respondents proposed that the houseparents should have the experience of rearing her own or adopted children and internship under the supervision of a senior houseparent. Of those who were of the opinion that the houseparent should have the experience of intimate living with children, 35 per cent proposed 2 years or more experience. In the opinion of the group as a whole, experience gained by domestics, domiciliary home attendants, housekeepers, and nurses' aides offered a limited contribution toward houseparent skill and evidence of such experience was not observed among most of the successful houseparents.

In regard to the attitudes reflected by houseparents, 93 per cent of the respondents indicated that "making each child secure through normal friendliness and respect for his rights" made a significant contribution to houseparent competency although only 52 per cent had found this attitude in most of the successful houseparents. In the judgement of 89 per cent of the group, the houseparent should reflect cheerfulness, kindness, and encouragement, which 61 per cent of the group found in most of the successful houseparents.

Inspection of Table 40 reveals 82 per cent content that "open-

Table 40

CHARACTERISTICS AND PERFORMANCE OF SUCCESSFUL HOUSEPARENTS RATED BY COWORKERS AND CHILD-CARE AUTHORITIES

Percentage of opinion Contribution of item to houseparent competency						Percentage of opinion Frequency of characteristic found in successful houseparents				
No Reply	None	Slight	Sub- stan- tial	Very great		None	Few	Half	Most	No Reply
					The houseparent should have completed:					
26.6	8.8	13.3	4.4	46.5	elementary school	7.0	9.3	2.3	55.0	26.0
6.6		13.3	22.2	57.5	high school		9.3	13.9	62.7	14.1
11.1		11.1	48.7	28.8	two years undergraduate work in college	7.0	51.2	11.5	9.3	21.1
17.7	6.6	11.1	39.9	24.4	four years undergraduate work in college	25.1	44.4	4.6	11.7	14.8
8.3	2.2	8.3	33.3	46.5	courses in counseling and guidance	30.1	34.8	4.6	13.8	16.4
11.1	2.2	6.6	37.7	42.1	course in Introduction to Exceptional Children	37.1	30.2	4.6	7.0	21.2
13.3		26.6	33.3	26.6	course -- basic sociology	18.3	49.0	4.6	7.0	21.2
11.1		13.3	37.7	37.7	course -- basic psychology	11.5	53.5	4.6	9.2	21.2
11.1	2.2	28.8	35.5	22.2	courses -- social sciences or other related fields	16.0	44.1		4.6	35.1

					The houseparent should have the experience of:					
48.7	2.2	2.2	6.6	39.9	successful intimate living with children for at least _____ years (fill in number)		7.0	18.6	30.6	43.8
2.1	6.6	13.3	48.7	28.8	rearing own or adopted children	4.6	11.7	39.8	39.0	4.6
8.8		15.5	39.9	35.5	internship under the supervision of a houseparent	18.5	30.1	11.7	21.1	18.6
33.1	6.6	11.1	35.5	13.3	teaching	18.5	42.5	9.4	4.6	25.9
8.8	2.2	35.5	35.5	17.7	social work	54.7	25.6	4.6	2.3	11.5
8.8	8.8	37.7	42.1	2.2	nurses aide	30.2	41.6	7.0	2.3	18.7
4.4	8.8	44.3	33.3	8.8	house keeper	23.2	39.7	11.5	13.8	11.5
4.4	4.4	37.7	35.5	17.7	household management	20.9	30.5	11.5	25.4	11.5
11.1	24.4	44.3	17.7	2.2	attendant in domiciliary home	40.1	27.9	4.6	11.5	16.2
8.8	42.1	35.5	13.3		domestic work	37.7	32.5	9.2	4.6	16.3

The houseparent should have the attitude reflected by:

2.2			8.8	88.6	an example of cheerfulness, kindness, and encouragement		2.3	36.9	60.8	
		2.2	15.5	82.0	openmindedness toward new developments		20.8	43.9	35.1	
2.2		4.4	17.7	75.4	appreciation of the value that each service has to offer in the total development of handicapped children		23.2	25.8	46.6	4.6

Table 40 (continued)

Percentage of opinion					The houseparent should have the attitude reflected by:	Percentage of opinion				
Contribution of item to houseparent competency						Frequency of characteristic found in successful houseparents				
No Reply	None	Slight	Substantial	Very great		None	Few	Half	Most	No Reply
2.2			4.4	93.0	making each child feel secure through normal friendliness and respect for his rights		11.5	34.5	51.8	2.3
11.1	11.1	13.3	24.4	39.9	willingness to waive the demands of unionized schedules of work		13.9	25.6	39.4	21.0
		2.2	22.2	75.1	interest and objectivity toward handicaps of youngsters and their resulting attitudes		13.9	32.2	47.0	7.0
2.2	2.2		37.7	57.5	objectivity toward self	2.3	34.6	32.7	23.4	7.0
2.2		4.4	37.7	55.3	objectivity toward others	2.3	23.1	34.8	30.5	9.1
			19.9	79.8	The houseparent should possess: respect and tolerance for the opinions of the group		14.0	46.1	37.6	2.3
2.2		9.4	19.9	68.8	personal satisfaction in socio-emotional growth, rather than academic	2.3	22.9	34.8	35.3	4.6
	2.2	4.4	28.8	64.1	firmness in relationships with children		2.3	44.2	51.3	2.3
6.6		2.2	15.5	75.4	moral strength		7.0	27.3	55.9	9.3

		4.4	24.4	71.0	sensitivity to opportunities to encourage maturation		20.6	34.8	37.5	7.0
2.2			24.4	73.2	appreciation of progress in children		9.3	41.6	44.6	4.5
2.2		2.2	26.6	68.8	alertness to changing interests		25.5	32.5	39.7	2.3
2.2	2.2	2.2	22.2	71.0	freedom from marked personality defects	2.3	16.2	32.3	44.4	4.6
2.2	4.4	2.2	17.7	73.2	freedom from feelings of hostility	7.0	13.9	36.9	37.3	4.6
2.2			6.6	90.8	warm accepting personality		9.3	41.2	47.0	2.3
2.2			22.2	75.4	sense of humor		11.7	48.8	37.2	2.3
2.2		2.2	11.1	84.2	concern for personal worth of individual		13.8	34.6	49.2	2.3
2.2			4.4	93.0	genuine liking for human beings and children in particular		7.0	25.3	67.7	
2.2			22.2	75.4	average intelligence or better		7.0	25.3	67.7	
2.2		2.2	24.4	71.0	an appreciation of people		16.2	27.8	51.4	4.6
2.2		2.2	28.8	66.6	worthy social qualities which children want to imitate		11.6	46.4	39.9	2.3
		4.4	37.7	57.5	an objective view of own purpose in institution		23.6	32.9	37.6	7.0
The houseparent should possess:										
					a willingness to keep abreast of developments affecting health and education of schoolage handicapped children					
	2.2	6.6	33.3	57.5		2.3	18.8	39.0	35.1	4.6

Table 40 (continued)

Percentage of opinion					The houseparent should possess:	Percentage of opinion				
Contribution of item to houseparent competency						Frequency of characteristic found in successful houseparents				
No Reply	None	Slight	Substantial	Very great		None	Few	Half	Most	No Reply
		15.5	42.1	42.1	attractive personal appearance		7.0	51.2	39.3	2.4
			24.4	75.4	friendly cooperative spirit toward others		2.3	47.9	47.9	2.3
		4.4	37.9	57.5	social techniques that can be applied in terms of child's own level of aspiration	2.3	25.7	32.4	30.4	9.2
2.2	6.6	15.5	35.5	39.9	social techniques that can be applied in terms of what the houseparent would like the child to achieve		27.9	37.6	20.8	13.9
		6.6	33.3	59.7	a repertoire of leisure time activities	4.6	32.5	30.3	27.8	4.6
			8.8	90.8	inherent interest in youngsters		7.0	20.6	67.8	4.6
			39.9	59.7	innate tact		18.6	46.3	25.7	9.3
2.2			17.7	79.8	infinite patience to deal with children's problems		20.8	37.1	37.4	4.6
8.8	11.1	17.7	24.4	37.7	professional status in his own right	21.0	39.5	16.2	7.0	16.3

15.5	2.2	19.9	39.9	22.2	awareness of the opportunity available to residential schools	9.3	34.8	21.0	20.8	14.1
4.4		2.2	24.4	63.8	sincerity of relationships		9.3	30.1	53.5	7.0
2.2		2.2	26.6	71.0	sensitivity to physically impaired children's needs		9.3	39.5	44.4	7.0
			11.1	88.6	calm confidence reflected in day-after-day level of working with children		18.5	39.4	37.6	4.6
					The houseparent should have sound working knowledge:					
2.2		4.4	44.3	48.7	of practical household and cottage management			39.3	49.2	11.5
2.2		4.4	46.5	46.5	of games, sport events and the plays usually liked by children	2.3	16.3	53.1	21.2	7.0
2.2	2.2	6.6	28.8	59.7	of principles of mental health; their promotion and application	9.3	34.8	39.4	14.0	2.3
2.2	2.2	17.7	50.9	26.6	of community recreational resources	4.6	42.0	32.5	11.7	9.3
					of the development of visual perception hearing perception, kinesthetic perception, eye and hand coordination					
11.1	4.4	13.3	46.5	24.4		8.5	44.2	18.5	4.6	14.0
6.6	2.2	8.8	35.5	46.5	of social problems and adjustments of visually impaired children	3.9	42.0	16.1	18.5	9.3

Table 40 (continued)

Percentage of opinion					The houseparent should have sound working knowledge:	Percentage of opinion s				
Contribution of item to houseparent competency						Frequency of characteristic found in successful houseparents				
No Reply	None	Slight	Sub-stantial	Very great		None	Few	Half	Most	No Reply
6.6	2.2	13.3	44.6	33.2	of the professional sources which can assist in meeting the needs of children	7.0	44.2	27.9	11.9	9.2
2.2		4.4	29.1	63.9	of the principles of normal child growth and development, (physical, emotional, intellectual)	4.6	39.4	34.9	18.7	2.3
4.4		6.6	37.7	50.9	of gross deviations from normal in the maturation of children	7.0	34.9	28.0	23.2	7.0
2.2		15.5	55.3	26.6	of first aid and simple treatment		11.5	44.5	35.1	9.3
2.2	2.2	17.7	46.5	31.0	of practical nursing to recognize main symptoms of common illnesses	7.0	16.3	37.1	30.3	9.3
2.2	4.4	13.3	64.1	15.5	of recording children's behavior	9.3	46.4	25.5	11.9	7.0
13.3	2.2	22.2	50.9	11.1	of educational materials and equipment adapted for the visually handicapped child	11.7	34.3	34.4	7.0	11.7
24.4		4.4	31.0	40.2	of the affects of institutionalization	4.6	30.6	14.3	16.6	33.9

				The houseparent should possess understanding:						
				of parent reactions toward those undertaking substitute roles with their children						
2.2		11.1	28.8	57.5		4.6	34.9	34.9	21.2	4.6
				of child and group control through permissiveness						
2.2	2.2	6.6	39.9	48.7		7.0	27.9	41.9	18.9	4.6
				of cultural patterns and environment from which pupil populations comes						
2.2	2.2	8.8	46.5	39.9		7.0	29.9	42.1	16.2	4.6
				of physical handicaps, causes, treatment and limitations						
4.4		11.1	55.3	28.8		11.9	27.8	30.6	21.2	9.3
				of readiness in social development						
2.2		11.1	44.3	46.5		9.1	23.2	44.6	18.9	4.6
				of developing self control in children						
2.2		4.4	33.3	59.7		4.6	25.5	41.9	23.4	4.6
				of need for consistent relations with children						
2.2		2.2	13.3	82.0		4.6	9.2	44.2	39.8	2.6
				of the total institution approach with the houseparent as a member of the professional team in their relation to the staffs of other departments						
	4.4	6.6	15.5	73.2		7.0	27.8	27.8	30.5	7.0
				of parent communication and interpreting child's needs to his own parents						
2.2	4.4	15.5	26.6	50.9		7.0	41.9	21.0	23.1	7.0
				of basic needs of children to warrant normal physical care						
2.2		6.6	33.5	57.2		2.3	9.3	34.5	49.2	4.6

Table 40 (continued)

Percentage of opinion					The houseparent should possess understanding:	Frequency of characteristic found in successful houseparents				
Contribution of item to houseparent competency						No Reply				
No Reply	None	Slight	Substantial	Very great						
					of abnormal behavior in children as systematic expression of some underlying causes	13.7	30.4	32.7	18.6	4.6
2.2		8.8	31.1	57.9	of sociological problems of institutionalization	13.8	39.7	23.4	16.1	7.0
2.2	6.6	11.1	39.9	39.9	of constructive emotional expression by children	9.2	37.2	21.0	23.2	9.3
2.2	2.2	4.4	35.5	55.3	of counseling and guidance principles	16.1	39.6	25.6	11.7	7.0
2.2	2.2	19.9	44.3	31.0	of his limitations	4.6	25.5	37.2	21.2	11.5
6.6		6.6	35.5	50.9	that institutional care alone cannot adequately meet child's needs for the duration of his childhood	4.6	13.8	28.0	44.4	9.3
6.6		8.8	26.5	57.9	the the residential institution cannot take the place of family life	2.3	18.6	18.4	53.8	7.0
4.4		6.6	28.8	59.7	that children living away from home do not react as they do at home	4.6	16.1	27.8	44.6	7.0
4.4		11.1	39.9	44.3						

4.4		11.1	42.1	42.1	that special demands on houseparents are different from parent's normal responsibilities for his own child	4.6	18.9	34.7	37.4	9.3
4.4		8.8	26.6	59.7	that elimination of parent from life of child does not eliminate parent influence upon child	7.0	21.0	18.6	46.7	7.0
2.2		8.8	26.6	61.9	that strong, two-way or opposing feelings about the parent may be present in the child	7.0	30.1	30.3	28.2	4.6
2.2	4.4	15.5	39.9	37.7	of society's attitudes toward the physically handicapped		30.2	34.8	25.6	9.3
2.2		13.1	51.1	33.5	of effects of social pressures on houseparent and children under their supervision	4.6	23.0	39.7	25.7	7.0
2.2	8.8	33.3	35.5	19.9	of the significance of pre-natal conditions, post-natal illnesses and accidents upon child development	14.3	42.2	21.2	16.6	7.0
2.2		17.7	44.3	35.5	of the significance of difference between school adjustment and cottage adjustment	9.3	30.3	25.5	25.5	9.3
2.2	2.2	8.8	28.8	57.5	about the developmental levels of children	9.3	27.9	30.3	23.4	9.3
					The houseparent should possess skill:					
2.2		4.4	33.3	59.7	in promoting the absorption of isolates into the group unit	4.6	32.2	25.6	30.6	7.0

Table 40 (continued)

Percentage of opinions					The houseparent should possess skill:	Percentage of opinions				
Contribution of item to houseparent competency						Frequency of characteristic found in successful houseparents				
No Reply	None	Slight	Substantial	Very great		None	Few	Half	Most	No Reply
2.2		4.4	24.4	68.8	in discovering positives in children	2.3	32.2	23.2	37.6	4.6
2.2		2.2	33.3	61.9	in providing opportunities for leisure time activities at a pace corresponding to physical, social, emotional and mental growth of the physically handicapped youngster	9.3	25.6	25.4	32.8	7.0
	13.3	24.4	44.3	17.7	in story telling for all age levels of children	7.0	39.9	30.2	11.7	11.5
2.2		6.6	35.5	55.3	in stimulating children's participation in social activities	2.3	15.9	34.7	30.6	16.4
2.2		6.6	44.3	48.7	in stimulating children's interest in dynamic and creative activities	7.0	27.6	25.4	35.6	4.6
2.2		6.6	22.2	68.8	in encouraging child's self help in activities	2.3	13.8	32.5	42.2	9.3
4.4	4.4	24.4	35.5	31.0	in arranging religious opportunities for youngsters	2.3	23.1	23.4	34.9	16.1
2.2		8.8	31.0	57.5	in supervising children in group routine		7.0	27.8	56.1	9.3

2.2		8.8	28.8	59.7	in developing work habits in children		11.3	20.8	54.1	13.7
2.2		4.4	26.6	66.6	in designing, adapting and modifying dormitory programs and schedules to meet individual needs of children	4.6	25.4	23.2	39.8	7.0
2.2		8.8	42.1	46.5	in the decoration of a bright and friendly home		20.6	32.5	39.9	7.0
					The houseparent should possess the ability:					
4.4		2.2	28.8	64.1	to provide for opportunities for personal and social adjustment within the group	2.3	25.3	28.0	37.4	7.0
4.4	2.2	4.4	28.8	59.7	to avoid condemnation, criticism, and moralisation	4.6	32.3	30.2	23.4	9.3
			11.1	88.6	to accept children as they are and make child feel he is wanted	2.3	16.2	34.5	44.7	2.3
	2.2	2.2	13.3	82.0	to admit his own errors, laugh at his own mistakes, and remain open to suggestions		34.7	32.5	30.5	2.3
2.2		6.6	22.2	68.8	to accept negative, hostile emotions and resulting behavior as natural	9.3	37.1	16.2	32.9	4.6
		4.4	39.9	55.3	to counsel informally as to personal attitudes and behavior	2.3	20.8	27.2	42.2	7.0
		2.2	35.5	61.9	to arrange for the opportunities for self expression by the children	4.6	25.7	43.9	18.8	7.0
2.2		2.2	48.7	46.5	to help child accept routine		13.7	27.7	51.5	7.0

Table 40 (continued)

Percentage of opinion					The houseparent should possess the ability:	Percentage of opinion				
Contribution of item to houseparent competency						Frequency of characteristic found in successful houseparents				
No Reply	None	Slight	Substantial	Very great		None	Few	Half	Most	No Reply
		2.2	11.1	86.4	to establish and maintain an effective relationship with children		9.3	37.1	51.5	2.3
			6.6	93.0	to establish a homey, warm, secure and free emotional climate that allows each child to develop according to his own potentialities	4.6	16.1	23.1	53.8	2.3
		4.4	15.5	79.8	to help children handle conflicts constructively	7.0	25.5	32.5	25.7	9.3
2.2	4.4	6.6	35.5	50.9	to encourage group management	7.0	27.8	34.8	23.2	7.0
2.2		2.2	28.8	66.6	to develop team play attitude among members of the living unit	4.6	20.8	37.1	32.8	4.6
			24.4	75.4	to solve every day problems		11.9	30.1	51.5	7.0
2.2		2.2	13.3	82.0	to refer unsolved problems to specialists without feelings of guilt or that such referrals indicate weakness	2.3	20.6	30.4	37.4	9.3
		2.2	17.7	79.9	to build in children the feeling that they can succeed and help those taste success who do not succeed	2.3	27.6	34.9	26.0	9.3

		2.2	8.8	88.6	to convey to the child that he is respected and valued		20.8	29.9	44.7	4.6
		22.2	44.3	33.3	to discharge duties as housekeeper	2.3	2.3	32.3	55.8	7.0
		2.2	17.7	79.8	to develop harmonious living plan in the unit		9.3	39.6	49.3	2.3
4.4		8.8	33.3	53.1	to relieve the child of the mental disturbance that may arise by his separation from his home	7.0	18.4	42.1	21.0	11.7
6.6		6.6	33.4	53.4	to further any elements of family living in the institution	2.3	16.1	37.0	35.1	9.3
4.4		2.2	31.0	61.9	to guide children in human relationships	2.3	23.0	32.5	37.3	4.6
		6.6	28.8	64.1	to describe behavior problem children to superiors		16.0	34.8	44.6	4.6
		4.4	19.9	75.4	to relax with children		13.9	36.9	46.8	2.3
4.4	2.2	15.5	17.7	59.7	to encourage the maintenance of home ties by the child	2.3	9.4	32.2	41.9	14.0
		2.2	19.9	77.6	to help children move on to greater freedom and self-reliance		16.2	34.6	44.4	4.6
			15.5	84.2	to cope with minor discipline problems satisfactorily	2.3	9.3	16.1	67.8	4.6
		2.2	11.1	86.4	to accept the physically handicapped child as a respected member of the group		7.0	27.5	58.6	7.0
		2.2	8.8	88.6	to show child that he is understood	2.3	18.5	27.6	47.0	4.6

Table 40 (continued)

8

Percentage of opinion					The houseparent should possess the ability:	Percentage of opinion				
Contribution of item to houseparent competency						Frequency of characteristic found in successful houseparents				No Reply
No Reply	None	Slight	Substantial	Very great		None	Few	Half	Most	
			6.6	93.0	to allow child freedom but be able to firmly control him when a reasonable limit has been reached		13.7	44.2	39.7	2.3
2.2	6.6	11.1	39.9	40.3	to guide the youngster into community activity outside the residential school	11.5	32.5	20.8	14.1	21.0
2.2		4.4	28.8	64.1	to provide opportunities for recognition of individual abilities and achievements of the children	2.3	25.5	29.9	33.0	9.3
2.2		17.7	39.9	39.9	to provide opportunities for practical use of skills developed in school	2.3	34.9	27.6	23.4	11.9
		6.6	31.0	62.9	to let children know what is expected of them		4.6	43.9	44.4	7.0
	2.2	15.5	31.0	50.9	to understand and handle constructively the feelings of parents and children about the child's limitations and school placement	13.8	28.0	20.8	27.9	9.3

		11.1	28.8	59.7	to discover areas in which physically impaired children have lacked the experiences in the living of normal children and provide experiences to fill these gaps of experience	11.9	37.4	21.0	25.5	4.6
2.2	2.2	6.6	35.5	53.1	to separate fact from opinion in child observation	7.0	25.5	37.3	18.7	7.0
4.4		6.6	37.7	50.9	to cope with and adjust to interruptions from outside the cottage	2.3	11.5	32.5	42.0	11.7
2.2	2.2	11.1	39.9	44.3	to adapt materials and equipment for use by handicapped children	2.3	32.5	34.8	23.1	7.0
		8.8	42.1	48.7	to work with children of different age levels	2.3	20.8	46.3	25.8	4.6
2.2		6.6	24.6	66.1	to prepare child socially to take his place in his own home and community	16.2	13.8	37.2	23.4	9.3
9.3	15.5	17.7	24.4	33.3	to counsel with parents of handicapped children	16.3	32.8	16.3	18.6	16.3
	4.4	4.4	13.3	77.6	to cope with behavior problems which can be handled without aid of specialists	9.3	7.0	32.5	42.2	9.3

Table 40 (continued)

Percentage of Opinion						Percentage of Opinion				
Contribution of item to houseparent competency						Frequency of characteristic found in successful houseparents				
No Reply	None	Slight	Sub- stan- tial	Very great		None	Few	Half	Most	No Reply
					The houseparent should possess the ability:					
			24.6	75.4	in social techniques to provide individual freedom as much as possible yet maintain social control	2.6	25.6	25.6	39.7	7.0
		4.4	19.9	75.4	to remain objective and well-adjusted during the experiences of hostility in the part of the individual or the group	7.0	37.3	20.8	30.5	4.6
		6.6	35.5	57.5	to determine readiness of children for various levels of work, manners, and customs	9.3	37.2	21.0	25.7	7.0
		2.2	19.9	77.6	to help child to grow or develop in independence		18.4	27.8	49.1	4.6

mindfulness toward new developments" is an important contribution to houseparent proficiency, but only 35 per cent were aware of this characteristic in most of the successful houseparents.

The houseparents should have an attitude reflected by an "appreciation of the value that each service has to offer in the total development of handicapped children" because 75 per cent of the respondents considered this as a valuable contribution to houseparent competency, although only 47 per cent observed this characteristic in most successful houseparents. The same percentage of the group found an attitude reflected by interest and objectivity toward the handicaps of youngsters in most of the houseparents and 75 per cent of the group proposed that this item was a very great contribution to houseparent competency.

Table 41 was constructed to summarize the desirable characteristics¹ for houseparents from the fourth category of the questionnaire. In the opinion of the respondents those items describing interpersonal relationships were found to a lesser degree among successful houseparents. The items listed on Table 41 could be used either as criteria for applicants or for the evaluation of houseparents. Generally, the child-care authorities gave higher ratings to those items than did those who have been co-workers with the houseparents of blind children.

The respondents showed less agreement in rating the items referring to the "sound working knowledge" of houseparents than in the other cate-

¹Seventy-five per cent or more of the respondents rated these items as very great contributors to houseparent competency.

Table 41

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS FOR HOUSEPARENTS SELECTED BY CHILD-CARE AUTHORITIES AND HOUSEPARENT COWORKERS

	Highly desirable for a houseparents	Typical of most successful houseparents
	Per cent Concurring	Per cent Concurring
The houseparent should possess:		
Inherent interest in children and adults	93.0	67.8
Warm accepting personality	90.3	49.0
Calm confidence reflected by infinite patience in day-after-day level of working with children	83.6	37.6
Concern for the personal worth of the individual	84.2	49.2
Tolerance for the opinions of the group	79.3	37.6
Average intelligence or better	75.4	67.7
Moral strength	75.4	55.9
Friendly cooperative spirit toward others	75.4	47.9

^ARated as very great contributors to houseparent competency. See Table 40.

gories. However, similar opinions were indicated by 64 per cent of the group concerning the contribution of a sound working knowledge of normal child growth and development to the proficiency of houseparents even though this characteristic had been observed to a limited degree in most of the successful houseparents.

Understanding the need for consistent relations with children was a significant contributor to houseparent skill in the consideration of 82 per cent of the group although the characteristic had not been observed in most of the successful houseparents. The majority of the respondents (73 per cent) were of the opinion that the understanding of the houseparent as a member of the professional team in the total institution approach was a very great contributor to houseparent proficiency although not more than 31 per cent had noted such an approach by most of the successful houseparents.

Encouraging the child's self-help was rated as a skill conducive to houseparent competency by 69 per cent of the respondents and was observed in most of the successful houseparents by 42 per cent. The same percentage proposed that the houseparent should possess enough skill to discover the positives in children. She should possess the skill to design and modify dormitory programs to fit the individual needs of children and to provide opportunities for leisure time activities at a pace corresponding to the physical, mental, social, and emotional growth of the physically handicapped youngsters. A majority of respondents (56 per cent) observed that most successful houseparents possess the skill to supervise children in group routine but only 58 per cent rated this as a great contributor to houseparent competency.

More agreement of opinion was registered for the last category of topics of Questionnaire IV tabulated on Table 40. See the summary on Table 42.¹ Examination of these responses reveal that the characteristics which were considered important contributors to houseparent competency were not recognized among most of the successful houseparents. These discrepancies indicate areas of improvement in houseparent selection and training and might be guide lines to further exploration of the attitude, role, and position of the houseparent in the institution setting.

Although the questionnaire was primarily designed to determine the greatest contributors to houseparent competency, conversely clues to those skills, abilities, and experiences that might be disregarded are exposed by listing items which the respondents felt contributed the least. A review of Table 40 reveals that experience in social work, nursing, household keeping and management, domiciliary home care, or domestic work do not contribute to houseparent competency. The ability to counsel with the parents of the children placed in their care was depreciated as well as having an understanding of the effects of the environment upon the child's early development. Recording child behavior by houseparents found little support.

The ratings indicated that knowledge of community recreation resources or sources of professional assistance in meeting the needs of the children was not of paramount importance and skill in arranging

¹Table 42 includes items rated as great contributors to houseparent competency by 75 or more per cent of the respondents.

Table 42

ABILITIES CONTRIBUTING TO HOUSEPARENT COMPETENCY
SELECTED BY CHILD-CARE AUTHORITIES AND HOUSEPARENT COWORKERS

The houseparent should possess the ability:	Highly desirable for houseparents ^a	Typical of most successful houseparents
	Per cent concurring	Per cent concurring
to establish a secure emotional climate that allows child to develop independently.	93.0	53.8
to allow child freedom yet be able to firmly maintain social control.	93.0	39.7
to accept children as they are and make child feel wanted and understood.	88.6	44.7
to convey to the child that he is respected and can succeed.	88.6	44.7
to establish and maintain a relaxed effective relationship with children.	86.4	51.5
to cope with minor discipline problems satisfactorily.	84.2	67.8
to refer unsolved problems to specialists.	82.0	37.4
to admit his own errors and remain open to suggestions.	82.0	30.5
to develop harmonious living plan in the unit.	79.8	47.3
to help children handle conflicts constructively.	79.8	25.7
to cope with behavior problems which can be handled without aid of specialists.	77.6	42.2

^aRated as very great contributor to houseparent competency. See Table 40.

religious opportunities for the children was considered unessential. Awareness of the opportunities available to residential schools was disregarded.

A college education was not stressed as significant with the suggested social science course given negligible support. Like teaching experience, the respondents rated the working knowledge of educational materials and the development of visual perception as non-essential contributors to houseparent competency. Story telling at all age levels was rated as insignificant.

The experience of rearing own or adopted children was largely disregarded by the respondents and willingness to work on schedules of work was regarded as immaterial to houseparent competency.

Summary

Items from Questionnaire IV, "The Characteristics and Performance of Houseparents" were rated by the child-care authorities and houseparent co-workers as to the contribution of each topic to houseparent competency. Those items rated as great contributors and yet were not frequently found among successful houseparents, may offer clues to staff selection and further in-service training for houseparents. The level of rating may determine the criteria for staff recruitment and the scope of required in-service training.

Although the questionnaire was not devised to rate individuals, through further study and refinement, these items might be utilized to evaluate houseparents or to screen applicants for employment. Even though only a differentiating few of the factors in the situation were

used, some exploratory identification may be workable without utilizing full measurement.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to organize observations and opinions regarding houseparents of blind children into a meaningful body of information. It seemed propitious to study the factors associated with the selection and in-service training of houseparents in view of the limited supply of trained applicants for the position.

The data gathered by interviews and questionnaires from administrators, houseparents, and co-workers were compiled, compared, and interpreted in the body of the study. The analysis of this data was limited to broad and general implications necessitated by the use of the survey procedures.

Opinions regarding desirable qualifications, performance, and working conditions for houseparents were collected; from which, recommendations for the improvement of the houseparent position were compiled.

Characteristics of the houseparent role and status were not clearly defined because the role requirements shift with each institution and the houseparents are not aware of their responsibilities within the staff pattern. The inability of the administrators to agree on the expectations of the position prevent a detailed definition of the role.

The contribution of the houseparent to the adjustment of the blind child is considered to be as important as that of the teacher, but houseparent salaries are two-thirds that paid teachers. Criteria for the

position are less than those generally held for teachers, the houseparents are scheduled for longer hours of work and they are required to supervise larger groups of children.

Although there is a trend to reduce the number of duty hours, the majority of houseparents are on duty more than 50 hours per week and are required to do varying amounts of domestic work which prevent them from giving all of their attention to children.

The ages of houseparents are older than those of 15 years ago and the children are generally under the care of persons who have an age level of their grandparents. Very few men occupy the position which contributes to a limited masculine influence upon the children.

Houseparents are inadequately trained because professional training is non-existent for the person entering the field of foster child care and there are very limited opportunities to gain experience as a houseparent before coming to the position. Although houseparents wish to improve their skills, they do not know how to proceed nor do their administrators generally provide training courses. The limited training that has been initiated includes: training-on-the job, lecture classes, case conferences, correspondence courses, staff conferences, and the institutes sponsored for the parents of pre-school blind children.

Houseparents do not have access to sufficient information regarding the children placed under their care and do not record information about the behavior of their children.

The communication between the child's home and the residential school is usually one-way and limited. In most states the staff members

seldom visit the home, however, the houseparents are the most frequent representatives of the institution when the parents visit the child.

From the data presented in this study, the following recommendations for administrative policy are proposed:

1. Applicants for the position should have had at least 2 years of training beyond high school with courses in either education, counseling, recreation, or social work fields.

2. Applicants should have, not only the experience of rearing their own children, but the experience of rearing foster children.

3. The position should be filled by emotionally stable persons who are from 25 to 65 years of age and are physically able to keep pace with the children under their supervision.

4. In view of the trend to increase the number of men in the elementary school experience and the lack of men on the residential school staffs, more housefathers should be employed.

5. To meet the demands of the position, the duty hours should be less than 50 each week, the number of children assigned to each group in the dormitory should approximate the same number assigned to each teacher, and the domestic tasks required of houseparents should be reduced to a minimum.

6. Houseparent training programs should be provided that will orient new personnel, encourage professional growth, and assist the houseparent to competently meet her opportunities.

7. More case records and information about the children should be made available to houseparents.

8. Houseparent salary ranges should approximate that of the

teachers in the same locality.

This is a record of limitations still to be overcome and the report may serve as a bench-mark to measure future progress in the house-parent profession.

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Return to:

Everett E. Wilcox
700 South Church Street
Salem, Oregon

APPENDIX A



A SURVEY OF THE STATUS OF HOUSE PARENTS

The following questionnaire is so designed that it is applicable in various types of residential facilities. Please complete every item as they apply to your facility.

Any information that you can supply in addition to that below will be helpful.

1. What is the number of house parents employed in your institution?

Male _____ Female _____

2. How many married couples are included in the above number? _____

3. Of those indicated in the first question, how many are married to other than house parents on the staff? _____

4. Are candidates for the house parent position screened by civil service? _____

5. What agencies refer house parent applicants for interview?

6. What per annum salaries are paid house parents?

Minimum \$ _____ Average \$ _____ Maximum \$ _____

What is the value of other compensations (board, room, etc.) offered in addition to the above salary? \$ _____ per annum

7. For purposes of comparison, what per annum salaries are paid teachers?

Minimum \$ _____ Average \$ _____ Maximum \$ _____

Compared to salaries paid in the local schools these salaries are above
same
below

(Circle term that applies)

Compared to salaries paid in the schools throughout the state these

blind school salaries are above
same
below (Circle term that applies)

8. Please circle the number of months that house parents are employed each year. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.
9. How many hours per week is each house parent on duty? _____
10. Please circle the minimum number of years of education required of house parents. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.
11. What particular academic courses in addition to the above education are required of house parents?
12. Please list previous experience required of house parent applicants?
13. What is the age range of your house parents? In the space to the left please place the number of house parents of the year level indicated.
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15 years to 20 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 51 years to 60 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21 years to 30 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 61 years to 70 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31 years to 40 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 71 years and above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 41 years to 50 years | |
14. How many different house parents supervise the same child during each week? _____
15. How often are house parents scheduled for or invited to staff meetings? Please check in space to the left: ☐ Regularly ☐ On official call ☐ Never
16. Is the staff meeting used for house parent training purposes? _____
17. Are case conferences used for house parent training purposes? _____
18. By what activities are the house parents integrated with the rest of the staff?

19. Is the house parent included in the conference that determines whether or not a youngster should be enrolled in the residential school?
Please check one in the space to left: () Routinely, () In special instances, () Never

Are the house parents included in the conference that determines whether or not the child is dismissed from school? _____

20. What is the title of the house parents' supervisor? _____
21. How often are supervision conferences held? _____
22. Of the staff members, who contacts the children's parents most often when they visit the institution? _____
23. At what intervals do the house parents contact the parents? _____
24. Of the staff, who visits the children's homes? _____
25. What percentage of the children's homes is visited by a staff member in the course of the year? _____%
26. To what extent do the house parents visit the homes of the children under their supervision? _____
27. What type of observation reports on the children's behavior do the house parents prepare? _____
28. What orientation to the position and duties are given novice house parents? _____

29. Do you have a staff library available to house parents? _____
30. Have there been or is there being planned, any training activities sponsored for cottage parents of your institution? _____

31. If yes, please check (✓) in the appropriate column to the right of the type of training listed.

	<u>Under Institution Sponsorship</u>	<u>Other Auspices</u>
Educational movies	()	()
Supervisory conferences	()	()
Lectures	()	()
Orientation for novices	()	()
Workshops	()	()
Institutes	()	()
Internship	()	()
Case conferences	()	()

TO THE LEFT, place #1 by the most successful; #2 the next successful; #3; etc.

~~Please list any other types of training activities used at your school:~~

(over)

32. What type of observation reports by house parents on children's behavior do you consider to be most desirable?

33. What information is made available to house parents about the children under their supervision? Please place a check mark (✓) by the category of records that are available to house parents.

- () No records
- () Vital statistics
- () Periodic summaries of educational progress
- () Summaries of pertinent medical information
- () Summary of nature, cause, and treatment of impairment
- () Social or field worker reports
- () Extract of field workers reports
- () Psychiatric reports
- () Parent correspondence

Please list below any other records that are accessible to house parents:

34. Do house parents make written reports of children's behavior for the information of the staff? _____

35. If funds and persons were available, please list the minimum qualifications you would consider necessary for persons employed as house parents of blind children.

EDUCATION:

EXPERIENCE:

COMPETENCIES:

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS:

36. Do you employ the house parents? _____ Do you supervise them? _____

Name

Position

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EVERETT WILCOX
700 South Church St.,
Salem, Oregon

APPENDIX B

STATUS OF HOUSE PARENTS

How many years have you been a house parent? What is your age?.....

How many years have you cared for children other than your own?.....

Are you or have you been married?

If answer is "yes", is your spouse employed at this institution?

If so, what is his or her position on the staff?

What was your education before coming to this position?

Please circle the highest grade completed in school.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 16 17

Please name all the courses, workshops, or professional conferences you have attended since becoming a house parent. Place a check (X) beside the most helpful.

Please list the types of previous experience or employment that you have found helpful in your present position. Check (X) the type that has been most helpful.

How did you find out about the opening for the house parent position at the institution where you now work?

What is the title of your supervisor?

How often do you have a conference with your supervisor?

What are the number of hours per week that you are on duty?

How many different children are under your care each week?

As a house parent, what prevents or makes difficult your carrying out your duties the way you would like?

Do you think that your work at the residential school is: (Check one)

- () as important as that done by the teachers?
 () less important than that done by the teachers?

Would it be of help to you if you were consulted as to which children will be under your care?.....

Are you now so consulted?

What information about children do you think would help you, to do a better job as house parent?

Please list your hobbies, interests, skills, or abilities that have helped you as a house parent.

Please check (X) each of the following that applies to you.

- () I feel I have enough training for my position as a house parent.
 () I feel I need more training.
 () I would take more training if it were available.
 () I would take more training even if I did it on my time off.
 () I would take more training if the supervisor would count it as part of my work.

Please check (X) the one that applies.

As a house parent I am most like:

- () a glorified housekeeper.
 () a counselor.
 () a substitute parent.
 () a guide for the children.
 () a leader of the children.
 () a guardian of the children.
 () a teacher of the children.

Or add any phrase that fits better

Are your observations about the children included in the home report?

Please list any activity (duty) asked of you which interferes with your usefulness as a house parent.

Are you required to record observations of the behavior of children under your care? (Such as a diary, a log, or slips sent to the office.)

Do you ever need help in handling a behavior problem in the dormitory?
If so, to whom do you go for help?

Do you hold regular conferences with supervisors about the problems of children?

Do you confer with the teachers about the problems of your children?

Are your suggestions for the children considered by your superiors and given a trial?

What is the training or life experience that you wish you had to help you as a house parent?

How would you go about improving your skill as a house parent if you had a chance?

What courses, in-service-training, or conferences have been arranged by your institution that were helpful to you? Place "1" in front of the most important, "2" in front of the next, "3" in front of the third, etc.

What information is given you about the children under your care?

Place a check mark (X) by the records that you use now

- ☐ None
- ☐ Vital statistics
- ☐ School records
- ☐ Medical records
- ☐ Summary of nature, cause and treatment of handicaps of your children
- ☐ Social or field worker reports
- ☐ Psychiatric reports
- ☐ Parents' letters

Please list below any records that you think should be given to home parents.

Please return to:
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APPENDIX C

WHAT SHOULD BE THE STATUS OF HOUSE PARENTS?

1. The house parents should receive a salary equal to:
teachers _____, nurses _____, social workers _____, custodial
workers _____, domestics _____.

If the above are not satisfactory, list any other category that would describe
the salary scale. _____

2. What should be the minimum age of house parents? _____
3. What should be the maximum age of house parents? _____
4. What should be the maximum number of house parents that supervise any
one child during the week? _____

5. Should house parents participate in:
Staff meetings? Yes _____ No _____
Case conferences? Yes _____ No _____
Conferences with parents? Yes _____ No _____

6. Is a married couple more successful than two single persons as house pa-
rents in the cottage unit?

7. Are persons who have been or are married more successful as house parents
than the unmarried?

8. Are persons who have reared children more successful as house parents
than those who have not?

9. What were the sources of applicants that have proved to be successful
house parents?

10. Who should supervise the house parent?

11. How often should regularly scheduled supervisory conferences for house
parents be held?

12. How many hours per week should each house parent be on duty? _____

13. Should the house parent be relieved of the housekeeping duties?
 To what extent?
14. Should the house parent be included in the conference that determines whether or not a youngster will be enrolled in the residential school?

15. To what extent should the house parent of the residential school visit the homes of the children she supervises?

16. Should written reports be required of house parents?
17. Should the staff meeting be used for house parent training purposes?
18. Should case conferences be used for house parent training purposes?
19. As far as training is concerned, is it more difficult to train married couples as house parents than single persons?

20. Please check one of the choices below. In the overall adjustment of the blind child to his environment, the contribution of house parents should be:

- ☐ as important as that made by teachers
- ☐ less important than that made by teachers

21. At the present time, the contribution of the house parent is:

- ☐ equal to teachers' contribution
- ☐ less than teachers' contribution

22. What information should be given to house parents about the children under their supervision?

Place a check mark (X) by the category of records that should be available to house parents.

- ☐ Vital statistics
- ☐ Periodic summaries of educational progress
- ☐ Medical records
- ☐ Summaries of pertinent medical information
- ☐ Summary of nature, cause and treatment of impairment
- ☐ Social or field worker reports
- ☐ Extract of field workers reports
- ☐ Psychiatric reports
- ☐ Extract of psychiatric reports
- ☐ Parent correspondence

Please list below any other records that should be accessible to house parents.

23. What do you consider to be the major obstacles preventing administrators of residential schools for the blind from securing adequate house parent staffs?

24. In view of the calibre of house parents known in your recent experience please suggest methods by which cottage parents might be brought closer to the desired qualifications and competencies.

Please rank by placing "1" for the most important method; "2" for the next important; "3" for the third; etc.

25. In what ways, if any, should the qualifications vary for the different age levels of youngsters?

Indicate unique or special qualifications which you deem important in working with children in each of following age categories:

under 7 years of age:

7 to 12 years:

12 to 16 years:

26. If funds and persons were available, please list the minimum qualifications you would consider necessary for persons employed as house parents of blind children.

Experience:

Education:

Competencies:

Other characteristics:

Please return to:
 EVERETT WILCOX
 700 South Church St.,
 Salem, Oregon

APPENDIX D

CHARACTERISTICS AND PERFORMANCE OF HOUSE PARENTS

For how many years have you had experience with house parents? _____
 Of the house parents you have known, what percentage have been successful? _____

Below are listed characteristics and qualifications that may or may not contribute to house parent performance. TO THE LEFT of each item below please place a rating using one of the following numbers:

- 0 No contribution to house parent competency.
- 1 Slight contribution to house parent competency.
- 2 Substantial contribution to house parent competency.
- 3 Very great contribution to house parent competency.

TO THE RIGHT of each item below place a check (X) in the column that will indicate the frequency of the characteristics found in SUCCESSFUL house parents you have known.

Rating Number		In no hp.	In few hp.	In half hp.	In most hp.
	EXAMPLE: The house parent should possess brown hair				
	The house parent should have completed				
	elementary school				
	high school				
	two years undergraduate work in college				
	four years undergraduate work in college				
	courses in counseling and guidance				
	course in Introduction to Exceptional Children				
	course—basic sociology				
	course—basic psychology				
	courses—social sciences or other related fields				
	Please list other pertinent academic courses				
	The house parent should have the experience of				
	successful intimate living with children for at least				
	years (fill in number)				
	rearing own or adopted children				
	internship under the supervision of a house parent				
	teaching				
	social work				
	nurses aide				
	house keeper				
	household management				
	attendant in domiciliary home				
	domestic work				

Rating Number		In no hp.	In few hp.	In half hp.	In most hp.
	The house parent should have the attitude reflected by:				
	an example of cheerfulness, kindness, and encouragement				
	openmindedness toward new developments				
	appreciation of the value that each service has to offer in the total development of handicapped children				
	making each child feel secure through normal friendliness and respect for his rights				
	willingness to waive the demands of unionized schedules of work				
	interest and objectivity toward handicaps of youngsters and their resulting attitudes				
	objectivity toward self				
	objectivity toward others				
	The house parent should possess:				
	respect and tolerance for the opinions of the group				
	personal satisfaction in non-academic growth, rather than academic				
	firmness in relationships with children				
	moral strength				
	sensitivity to opportunities to encourage maturation				
	appreciation of progress in children				
	alertness to changing interests				
	freedom from marked personality defects				
	freedom from feelings of hostility				
	warm engaging personality				
	sense of humor				
	concern for personal worth of individual				
	genuine liking for human beings and children in particular				
	average intelligence or better				
	an appreciation of people				
	worthy social qualities which children want to imitate				
	an objective view of own purpose in institution				
	a willingness to keep abreast of developments affecting health and education of schoolage handicapped children				
	attractive personal appearance				
	friendly cooperative spirit toward others				
	social techniques that can be applied in terms of child's own level of aspiration				
	social techniques that can be applied in terms of what the house parent would like the child to achieve				
	a repertoire of leisure time activities				
	inherent interest in youngsters				
	innate tact				
	infinite patience to deal with children's problems				

Rating Number		In no hp.	In few hp.	In half hp.	In most hp.
	professional status in his own right				
	awareness of the opportunity available to residential schools				
	sincerity of relationships				
	sensitivity to physically impaired children's needs				
	calm confidence reflected in day-after-day level of working with children				
	The house parent should have sound working knowledge:				
	of practical household and cottage management				
	of games, sport events and the plays usually liked by children				
	of principles of mental health, their promotion and application				
	of community recreational resources				
	of the development of visual perception, hearing perception, kinesthetic perception, eye and hand coordination				
	of social problems and adjustments of visually impaired children				
	of the professional services which can assist in meeting the needs of children				
	of the principles of normal child growth and development, (physical, emotional, intellectual)				
	of gross deviations from normal in the maturation of children				
	of first aid and simple treatment				
	of practical nursing to recognize basic symptoms of common illnesses				
	of recording children's behavior				
	of educational materials and equipment adapted for the visually handicapped child				
	of the affects of institutionalization				
	The house parent should possess understanding:				
	of parent reactions toward those undertaking substitute roles with their children				
	of child and group control through permissiveness				
	of cultural patterns and environment from which pupil population comes				
	of physical handicaps, causes, treatment and limitations				
	of readiness in social development				
	of developing self control in children				
	of need for consistent relations with children				
	of the total institution approach with the house parent as a member of the professional team in their relation to the staffs of other departments				
	of parent communication and interpreting child's needs in his own parents				
	of basic needs of children to receive normal physical care				

Rating Number		In no hp.	In few hp.	In half hp.	In most hp.
	of abnormal behavior in children as systematic expression of some underlying causes				
	of sociological problems of institutionalization				
	of constructive emotional expression by children				
	of counselling and guidance principles				
	of his limitations				
	that institutional care alone cannot adequately meet any child's needs for the duration of his childhood				
	that the residential institution cannot take the place of family life				
	that children living away from home do not react as they do at home				
	that special demands on house parents are different from parent's normal responsibilities for his own child				
	that elimination of parent from life of child does not eliminate parent influence upon child				
	that strong, two-way or opposing feelings about the parent may be present in the child				
	of society's attitudes toward the physically handicapped				
	of effects of social pressures on house parent and children under their supervision				
	of the significance of pre-natal conditions, post-natal illnesses and accidents upon child development				
	of the significance of difference between school adjustment and cottage adjustment				
	about the developmental levels of children				
	The house parent should possess skill				
	in promoting the absorption of isolates into the group unit				
	in discovering positives in children				
	in providing opportunities for leisure time activities at a pace corresponding to physical, social, emotional and mental growth of the physically handicapped youngster				
	in story telling for all age levels of children				
	in stimulating children's participation in social activities				
	in stimulating children's interest in dynamic and creative activities				
	in encouraging child's self help in activities				
	in arranging religious opportunities for youngsters				
	in supervising children in group routine				
	in developing work habits in children				
	in designing, adapting, and modifying dormitory programs and schedules to meet individual needs of children				
	in the decoration of a bright and friendly home				
	The house parent should possess the ability:				
	to provide for opportunities for personal and social adjustment within the group				

Rating Number		In no hp.	In few hp.	In half hp.	In most hp.
	to avoid condemnation, criticism, and moralization				
	to accept children as they are and make child feel he is wanted				
	to admit his own errors, laugh at his own mistakes, and remain open to suggestions				
	to accept negative, hostile emotions and resulting behavior as natural				
	to counsel informally as to personal attitudes and behavior				
	to arrange for the opportunities for self expression by the children				
	to help child accept routine				
	to establish and maintain an effective relationship with children				
	to establish a homey, warm, secure and free emotional climate that allows each child to develop according to his own potentialities				
	to help children handle conflicts constructively				
	to encourage group management				
	to develop team play attitude among members of the living unit				
	to solve every day problems				
	to refer unsolved problems to specialists without feelings of guilt or that such referrals indicate weakness				
	to build in children the feeling that they can succeed and help those taste success who do not succeed				
	to convey to the child that he is respected and valued				
	to discharge duties as house keeper				
	to develop harmonious living plan in the unit				
	to relieve the child of the mental disturbance that may arise by his separation from his home				
	to further any elements of family living in the institution				
	to guide children in human relationships				
	to describe behavior problem children to superiors				
	to relax with children				
	to encourage the maintenance of home ties by the child				
	to help children move on to greater freedom and self-reliance				
	to cope with minor discipline problems satisfactorily				
	to accept the physically handicapped child as a respected member of the group				
	to show child that he is understood				
	to allow child freedom but be able to firmly control him when a reasonable limit has been reached				
	to guide the youngster into community activity outside the residential school				
	to provide opportunities for recognition of individual abilities and achievements of the children				

[illegible]

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